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## ABSTRACT

This study examined the media coverage of California higher education in the popular press in four of the state's major dailies. In particular the study examined the roles that the San Francisco Chronicle, the Sacramento Bee, the Los Angeles Times, and the San Jose Mercury News play in fostering the public debate about higher education. All the higher education coverage of these papers during the period July 1, 1991, through June 30, 1992, was examined using a computer search that captured all articles that, directly or indirectly, addressed some aspect of state higher education. Some 420 usable articles were examined. At least one higher education reporter at each of the four papers received copies of the first draft, followed by on-site interviews. Their opinions are reflected in the concluding section of this report. The report concludes that, while the quality of the coverage compared well with coverage of leading dailies in other states, coverage was not ideal in terms of arousing public interest in an assessment of where the state should be going with its higher education system. Policy implications of events and stories were seldom pursued to any serious degree. (Includes methodology notes, information on the author, and 27 reference notes.) (JB)

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# THE PRESS AND CALIFORNIA HIGHER EDUCATION

A REPORT FROM

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**THE PRESS AND  
CALIFORNIA HIGHER EDUCATION**

William Chance

May 1993

## FOREWORD

One of the central purposes of the California Higher Education Policy Center is to stimulate public discussion and debate about the future of our colleges and universities. Those who established the Center and those who funded it were convinced that a more rigorous public discourse regarding the state's future needs for higher education, the purposes, organization and finance of higher education is essential. Such a discourse is a necessary condition for stimulating constructive change and reform and for building public consensus around the role of higher education in California's future.

Several of the Center's initial activities have sought to gain and share insight into the public conversation about higher education in California. In *Public Policy by Anecdote* and *The California Higher Education Policy Vacuum*, the Center assessed the health of the policy-making apparatus from the institutional to the state level and found a general unwillingness or inability to articulate fundamental policy issues on the part of many of those responsible for providing educational and political leadership. In this report the Center examines another major participant in shaping public discourse, the press. The underlying question that led to the commissioning of this report is whether the press is part of the problem or part of the solution of improving the policy conversation.

The answer is mixed. This essay by William Chance, a veteran observer and analyst of education policy, provides important insight not only into the role of news and editorial coverage of higher education but also into the California political and educational environment. Chance's analysis, which is based on coverage of higher education by four major California papers over a one-year period also incorporates his interviews with reporters and editorial writers from the same papers.

On behalf of the Center, I wish to express our appreciation to William Chance for undertaking this project and for his contribution to our understanding of the role of the press. We would also like to thank the journalists who contributed their time and insights to this project.

The California Higher Education Policy Center welcomes the reactions of readers to this report.

Patrick M. Callan  
Executive Director

# THE PRESS AND CALIFORNIA HIGHER EDUCATION

## Report Summary

For at least the past decade, the nation has been engaged in a spirited national debate over the quality and effectiveness of the education system, a debate centered on K-12 education. So far the dialogue has not extended to higher education. Few quarrel with the need to push for excellence in America's mandatory educational sector, but few insist with comparable fervor on evidence of performance from the colleges and universities. There are not many states where this is more apparent than California, which is considered and which considers itself a world leader in public higher education.

Significant pressure for change in higher education is unlikely to develop spontaneously; the source must be external. This is not likely to form, however, until civic skepticism and concern are aroused—until a campaign for improvement based on public distress over the accessibility, responsiveness, quality, and effectiveness of higher education develops.

This leads to the question of media coverage of higher education in the popular press. The principal aim of this report is to examine that coverage.

To determine the role the California press might perform with respect to fostering a public debate about higher education in California, the pertinent coverage of four of the state's major dailies (*San Francisco Chronicle*, *Sacramento Bee*, *Los Angeles Times*, and *San Jose Mercury News*) for the period July 1, 1991, through June 30, 1992, was reviewed.

The quest for answers to two questions guided the inquiry—What might be the press responsibility for the fact that the public scrutiny directed to education for the last decade or so has failed to encompass higher education? What might be done to expand the range of interest and stimulate a public discussion that

could lead to an examination of the higher education systems?

A general conclusion is that while the quality of the higher education coverage by these four papers and their writers during the year would compare well with the coverage of the leading dailies in any other state, in terms of arousing public interest in an assessment of where the state should be going with its higher education systems, it was not ideal. The reporting could not be accurately or fairly described as superficial, but the policy implications of events and stories were seldom pursued to any serious degree. The emphasis was more on symptoms than causes. There was extensive coverage of the following topics: proposed student fee increases; university faculty teaching loads (faculty productivity); lack of minority proportionality among students, administrations, and faculties; distended administrative salaries and perquisites; reductions in student financial aid availability; extended time to degree completion; student loan defaults; university research overhead charges; presidents resigning under pressure; political correctness; budget scandals at community colleges; aborted presidential searches; student (sometimes professorial) cheating; racism on campus; release time for research for publications in obscure journals; and other such matters. But none of them prompted much probing for the higher education policy issues that might be involved. Suggestions that something might be profoundly wrong with the business of higher education were sparse.

To some extent the quality of press criticism was affected by an implicit deference. Seldom were writers harshly critical of California higher education as an establishment. Rather, stories usually stressed the unusual nature of the extraordinary resources California's higher education segments represent.

This report argues that at least two sorts of issues exist. The most immediately evident "Issues of the First Kind" are symptomatic and obvious, those that encompass the more discernible questions connected with newsworthy actions. The other set consists of "Issues of the Second Kind." These involve organic considerations; they are profound and consequential and almost never immediately apparent.

At one level, at least, the major issues concerning higher education in California proved to be those that received the most coverage in the papers. Predominantly, these concerned the effects of the budget crisis on students, faculty, and institutions (and state enrollment policies), and the issues surrounding University of California President David Gardner's decision to resign, including the subsequent disclosures relating to his severance package and the discovery of other unusual administrative salaries and perquisites.

As demonstrated by the coverage of these matters, the press does a good, often excellent, job with Issues of the First Kind. But it seems less able to sufficiently address Issues of the Second Kind.

The report reviews several higher education articles that were considered exemplary cases of newspaper coverage. These are followed by excerpts from articles during the year that concerned the effects of the state's budget crisis on higher education.

The coverage reviewed was considered generally objective and balanced. But if it was extensive, it also was uneven in its presentation of imaginative, hope-inspiring solutions.

The talents of the reporters did not appear to be the cause, as all of the papers utilized corps of higher education reporters who displayed excellent journalistic skills. The more likely causes were issue complexity vis-a-vis assumptions about reader receptivity, constraints on time, and the relatively limited space available for news analysis.

If the press is to be expected to serve as an active and objective third party by alerting the reading public to the policy implications of

higher education events, it will need some help. The California Higher Education Policy Center could assist by serving as an unbiased resource and catalyst. If the Center would raise issues and stimulate discussion and provide information and data, reporters agree it would be of service. They also agree that if the Center released timely and pertinent reports and arranged press conferences, these would be covered. If these reports address systemic issues, those also would be reported irrespective of their complexity. Reporters similarly agree that well-written Op-Ed pieces would be welcome. And they concur with the assumption that a knowledgeable contact at the Center would be utilized frequently. Finally, they acknowledge that there are not many others that can or will serve as a resource.

A comprehensive and effective approach for the Center will require a thoughtful plan, and that is considered beyond the scope of this report. But all agree the need is evident and the results would be worth the effort.

For at least the past decade, Americans have been spectators of a spirited national debate over the quality and effectiveness of the education system. Most of the controversy has centered on K-12 education. In spite of occasional references to "higher education's smoking gun" (e.g., the universities' role in preparing teachers and administrators, influencing high school graduation standards, etc.) and indications that all may not be tranquil in that domain, the dialogue has not extended to the levels of higher education.

This is not a recent observation, of course. In a 1985 survey of state education reform initiatives it was noted that higher education in general, and the teacher colleges in particular, had escaped the K-12 controversy virtually unscathed.<sup>1</sup> This same report criticized higher education faculty, especially those in education departments, both for their lack of leadership in the reform movement and their proclivity, "as part of education's interlocking directorate," to insist that proposed improvements lack a sufficient research footing. The authors of the survey assumed that the faculties' resistance to the proposed improvements was based on the fact that their institutions had not initiated the changes. The report ended with the observation that the second wave of school reforms would have to include higher education or it would be foredoomed to failure.

The case for inclusion of higher education in the present "Great American School Reform Movement" is strong, but an equally robust argument can be made for a sustained debate over the structure, means, and purposes of higher education in its own right.

There exists little disagreement with present state and national emphases on a highly trained work force or with the presumption that international economic competitiveness necessitates education of unparalleled levels of quality at the postsecondary level. There also exists little disagreement with the assertion that the country is still a long way from where it needs to be in these respects. Less clear are the reasons why public anxieties about education have failed to extend beyond the K-12 sphere into the loftier

educational levels.

Few quarrel with the need to push for excellence in America's mandatory educational sector, but few insist with comparable fervor on similar evidence of performance from the colleges and universities. The generally uncritical attitudes displayed toward higher education indicate a collective sanguinity that borders on reverence. There are few states where this is more apparent than California, which is considered and which considers itself a world leader in public higher education.

Perhaps a sufficient argument for such a critical examination has not yet been made. More likely, the case is there but in residence beneath the detachment and abstractions that seem to characterize the higher education enterprise. Whether or not, significant pressure for change in higher education is unlikely to develop spontaneously from within; the source of that must be external. Sufficient pressure is not likely to form, however, until civic skepticism and concern are aroused—until a campaign for improvement based on public distress over the accessibility, responsiveness, quality, and effectiveness of higher education develops.

In his book, *The Power of Public Ideas*, Robert Reich asserts that: "The core responsibility of those who deal in public policy—elected officials, administrators, policy analysts—is not simply to discover as objectively as possible what people want for themselves and then to determine and implement the best means of satisfying these wants. It also is to provide the public with alternative visions of what is desirable and possible, to stimulate deliberation about them, provoke a re-examination of premises and values, and thus to broaden the range of potential responses and deepen society's understanding of itself."<sup>2</sup>

For Reich the problem is "... to engage the public in rethinking how certain problems are defined, alternative solutions envisioned, and responsibilities for action allocated. In his view, ... policy makers' primary responsibility [at least on occasion] should be to foster public deliberation about where the public interest lies and what our common obligations are,

rather than simply to render decisions."<sup>1</sup>

The operating assumption is that only by making people aware of the civic interest (what is good for society) can the system constrain selfish interests, cultivate enlightened change, and make democracy work. This is accomplished through public debate, through the continuous re-articulation and re-creation of public values.

The public discourse on K-12 education has not yet led to all of the improvements in student achievement that have been envisioned, but some lasting changes have occurred, and the undertaking continues. This could not have happened had the issue failed to register on the public agenda through debates that began in several states but soon acquired national breadth, debates fostered and supported by the media at all levels.

Thus arises the subject of the media's role, particularly the popular press, as prodger. An examination of that is the aim of this paper.

To determine the role the California press might perform with respect to fostering a public debate about higher education in California, the pertinent coverage of four of the state's major dailies (*San Francisco Chronicle*, *Sacramento Bee*, *Los Angeles Times*, and *San Jose Mercury News*) for the period July 1, 1991, through June 30, 1992, was reviewed. (The details governing the choice of these four papers are outlined in the appendix.)

The quest for answers to two questions loosely guided the inquiry: What might be the press' part with respect to the fact that the public scrutiny directed to education for the last decade or so has failed to encompass higher education? What might be done to expand the range of interest and stimulate a public discussion that could lead to an examination of higher education?

Other relevant questions were: To what extent is the press in California, through its coverage of higher education, promoting or retarding such debate? To what extent is the medium reporting occurrences and symptoms rather than exploring evidence of underlying

policies or problems in need of change or repair? Does the California press treat the higher education systems with a deference not normally extended to other public service sectors, a deference that effectively defers discussion of change?

Before turning to these questions, one general observation about the press coverage seems warranted. This concerns the matter of accuracy. In a recent book about media coverage of K-12 education, George Kaplan reacted negatively about the subject of accuracy in news reporting: "After veteran publicist Frank Mankiewicz left the presidency of National Public Radio in 1983, he told *Time* that 'sooner or later everybody will know the dirty little secret of American journalism, that the reports are wrong. Because sooner or later everybody will have been involved in something that is reported. Whenever you see a news story you were part of, it is always wrong.'"<sup>2</sup>

Without disputing this assertion, the accuracy of the reporting in the California papers reviewed as part of the present study was good, at least to the extent that there were no obvious instances in which different newspapers' stories of the same events varied to any important degree. Overall, the reporting appeared factual. People who find themselves the subjects of press coverage might share Mankiewicz's view, but few charges of inaccuracy were encountered in letters to the editors of these papers. If the stories examined were inaccurate, it must be assumed that they all were so to essentially the same degree.

### The Press As Critic

What immediately follows is subjective, since there are no easy standards or measures that can be handily applied to assess press coverage. Nevertheless, while the quality of the higher education coverage of these four newspapers and their writers during this year would measure well in comparison with the coverage of the leading dailies in any other state, in terms of success in arousing public interest in an examination of where the state should be going with its higher education systems (or calling attention to the diaphanous quality of the

monarch's garments), it was not ideal. While the reporting could not be accurately or fairly described as superficial, the policy implications of events and stories were seldom pursued and rarely probed to any serious degree. The emphasis was more on symptoms than organic causes.

The press seemed to embrace uncritically the aphorisms and equations that form the conventional wisdom about American higher education, . . . "the one sector where we clearly lead the world" ("and California clearly leads the nation"); "less money means fewer students"; "constricted funding means reduced quality"; "decreased budgets mean increased student fees"; "money for higher education means money for economic competitiveness"; etc. This also was the case with the implicit dichotomy commonly believed to exist between educational quality and access, in which the two are counterposed as an either-or choice in a relationship that vastly oversimplifies the issue by ignoring the consequences of choosing one at the expense of the other. At least it can be argued that a state cannot have a high quality public system of higher education if that system severely restricts access, or if access is not accompanied by instructional effectiveness and persistent student success. This argument, however, was not detected in the survey of articles.

The coverage of UC President David Gardner's retirement is illustrative. When all of the follow-on articles were added, this topic became the second most heavily reported higher education issue in California for the year. (The budget crisis was first; in several respects, the two became related.) Immediately following the announcement of President Gardner's intention to retire, the articles in all of the papers, some in the form of personal profiles, were highly complimentary of his accomplishments. The tone changed as the size of his retirement package and the manner in which it had been approved by the University of California Board of Regents became known. The criticism increased as evidence of administrative salaries and perquisites throughout both university systems developed.

All of these discoveries were carefully reported. But the condemnation of the UC Regents' action respecting Gardner (as well as the expressions of concern for California's higher education system represented in the coverage of the budget crisis) did not prompt much in the way of inquiry into underlying policies and organizational cultures. Such variables as higher education governance and institutional autonomy, management distinctions that are unique in governmental systems, were not placed on the table.

President Gardner's retirement package might have evoked little more than a few nervous coughs or raised eyebrows in more economically expansive times, but in the context of rampant speculation about the effects of the budget cuts on the state's colleges and universities, the generous retirement package awarded him by an obviously appreciative Board of Regents was instantly transmogrified into the exorbitant classification by at least an order of magnitude. Yet, with the possible exception of a few partially veiled references to the central administrative apparatus of the CSU system, which seems to provide a recurrent target for the California press, the stories skirted any treatment that might seem unduly disparaging of the UC governing structure or of the higher education "dream" the system has come to depict.

The absence of deep probing also characterized the coverage of other events by the four papers during the year, including proposed student fee increases; university faculty teaching loads (faculty productivity); lack of minority proportionality among students, administrations, and faculties; distended administrative salaries and perquisites; reductions in student financial aid availability; extended time to degree completion; student loan defaults; university research overhead charges; presidents resigning under pressure; political correctness; budget scandals at community colleges; failed presidential searches; student (sometimes professorial) cheating; racism on campus; release time for research for publications in inconsequential journals; etc. None of these stimulated much in the way of picking among the ashes

for the higher education policy issues that might be involved; hence, suggestions that something might be profoundly wrong with the business of higher education were sparse.

Press treatments were more often in the form of personalized references to the consequences of events on the college plans of individual students, the aspirations of individual faculty members, or the status of individual institutions than in the form of advisories that something profoundly different and lasting might be in store.

There is no desire here to belittle efforts to describe the effects of funding cutbacks on the plans of individuals, but intriguing observations such as those raised by A. H. Halsey in a recent book on the California master plan for higher education were rarely tested:

"... One cannot but be impressed by the ever-buoyant optimism of the California education institutions. As President Gardner put it, 'the gold rush began in 1849 and has never stopped.' People come to California looking for a better life. By common consent they almost believe in the nineteenth-century idea of progress, even though they would deny formal adherence to such allegiance if challenged. They nonetheless behave as if a better future is always there to be found. They believe that education is the steadfast friend of social progress and they are wholeheartedly committed to this idea. Yet, when they contemplate the constraints which have been put on public support through Proposition 13, Proposition 98 and the Gann ceiling, they draw what may seem to some Europeans a surprising conclusion. ... [I]f the Californians had to choose between an expansion involving the dropping of standards at the apex of their structure of public higher education in the University of California, they would with sadness but without hesitation sacrifice quantity to quality. The expansion program presupposes a thriving economy and willingness to pay. If there is prosperity, the education system will expand further. But if there is

economic recession or failure to support education with dollars, then the ultimate value for California's educational leadership would be to preserve the high standards that have been so dearly won from their past efforts."<sup>5</sup>

Initial responses to the budget crisis seem to support the view that the predominant concern was with the maintenance of higher educational quality. But the deduction (perhaps unique to California) that citizens will sacrifice access to quality is based on several unstated premises that should be validated before it is accepted as a logical conclusion.

There is a fundamental and still unanswered question whether the people of California (or any other state) will be permanently disinclined to sacrifice quality to quantity (assuming for a moment that there must be a forced choice for one over the other) or whether they would indefinitely accept a highly selective system over an accessible one. Stated differently, while parents and students will rightfully expect some reasonable qualitative return on their money, they will not likely tolerate public university systems that systematically and continuously deny access to their children, whether to assure the perpetuation of the quality myth or for some other reason.

Another unexamined element is the presumption that institutions, in this case the University of California, utilize resources maximally and, therefore, that the continuation of high standards of educational quality (assumed to be present) in the context of enrollment increases requires equally increased resources.

Any supposition of impeccable efficiency might have been at least tentatively challenged by chronic complaints of students: complaints over the time required to complete degrees, difficulties of getting into classes, fee increases, evidence of increasing student debt loads, high dropout rates among underrepresented minorities, low teaching loads for full-time faculty, and at least anecdotal evidence of poor student achievement. News of all of these was breaking amidst the accounts of administrative pay and perquisite packages that began to mushroom

following the announcement of President Gardner's severance package, and amidst the alarmed outcries of presidents and chancellors anticipating impending impoverishment.

Still another intriguing if unexamined issue pertains to the implication that achievement of "The California [Higher Educational] Dream" requires an infinitely thriving and expanding economy. If so, what may be the higher education policy implications of the presently stagnant and contracting economy?

At the conceptual level, the state's budget crisis inspired speculation about steps that could be taken by the segments to absorb proposed cuts. These were reported in the papers, as were the sometimes shrill reactions to them. The inevitable predictions of threats to the master plan for higher education also were quoted. Except for one editorial and a few other indirect references (cited below), however, there were no suggestions of a possibility that the master plan might be more form than substance, that it probably has never fully worked, that, in fact, it was not developed as "a plan" in the first place, and that if demographic and economic events in California have not already rendered it obsolete, they surely will by the end of the decade.

Rather than these, the impression was that the master plan, which was presumed to have guided the development of higher education in California for the past three decades, possesses hallowed status and, icon-like, was now in harm's way. While one editorial writer did not accept the begged questions—and asked, "So what?"—most others did accept the inviolate status of the master plan.

The question is legitimate; there is strong evidence that the master plan should be reconsidered. This is implied by Clark Kerr's observation that the plan leaves people with the illusion that the segments are integrated and self-contained when in reality, "They continually kick against the plan, battling its enrollment and resource constraints, invading one another's boundaries and violating the spirit of the original compromises, going in one direction when the master plan suggests they should

continue in another."<sup>6</sup> Clark Kerr, of course, was one of the plan's drafters.

Pat Callan, former director of California Postsecondary Education Commission (CPEC), took the argument further, asking whether the master plan, "with all its rational seductions and air of bureaucratic order, has outlived its utility. . . . Has ossification set in? Does our reverence for the plan prevent Californians from considering fresh alternatives for the 1990s and beyond? Do the segments in their system forms provide the flexibility and novelty claimed for them?"<sup>7</sup> Few questions such as these rose to the surface in the newspaper stories.

The matter is one of depth of coverage, and the problem is not unique to the California press. A recent *Washington Post Weekly* article by John Yang, "In California, Another Dream Fades: High-quality, Low-cost Public Education Falls Victim to the Fiscal Crisis," began to peruse some of the deeper ramifications of the budget cuts, and it ranks with the best of the home-based coverage. Even here, however, in terms of some of the more profound questions the budget crisis poses for the future, the treatment was more tantalizing than satisfying: "This year's budget cuts and fee increases are just the latest factors forcing California's political and educational leaders to reconsider the state's long-standing commitment to low-cost, quality higher education for all its residents. Fewer students, many predict, will end up paying more for state-financed degrees than envisioned in the master plan that has guided the state's higher education system for more than three decades."

Yang quoted CSU Chancellor Munitz as follows: "The state is shifting the burden from taxpayers to students." He noted that Assemblyman Tom Hayden sees all of this as a "calculated shift from a belief that higher education is a public investment in the state's general welfare to one that it is a private investment in future personal earnings." The article pointedly quoted Hayden to the effect that, "We cut classes, but we subsidize country club dues." Yang then discussed the tiered enrollment system in some detail, describing it succinctly for the national audience. He also talked about missions: "A

change in the mission and focus of California's colleges and universities likely would be felt the most at the Cal State campuses. These institutions have traditionally been the first rung on the ladder for this state's burgeoning immigrant and minority populations."

Yang begged a few questions, among them the aforementioned supposition of quality in university programs, but he also introduced the reader to some new perspectives, not the least of which was the reality of "state-financed degrees that are not means-based," a conceptually accurate descriptor unusual in the general lexicon. Yang's story ended there.

The ubiquitous supposition of high quality can impede incisive questioning. Some might find vexing the lack of inquisitiveness displayed toward such common indications of declining or inferior quality as large lower-division classes, restricted student access to faculty, extensive use of graduate students as teaching assistants, etc., but in spite of troubling evidence of low teaching loads, unavailable advisors, and emphases on possibly meaningless research at the expense of teaching, there were few articles that poked at higher education's sacred quality cows. Nothing of the iconoclastic (if bombastic) tone of Robert J. Samuelson was displayed in any of the California newspaper articles that were considered." Samuelson wrote, "You should treat skeptically the loud cries coming from colleges and universities that the last bastion of excellence in American education is being gutted by state budget cuts and mounting costs. Whatever else it is, higher education is not a bastion of excellence. It is shot through with waste, lax academic standards, and mediocre teaching and scholarship. . . Higher education is bloated. Too many professors do too little teaching to too many ill-prepared students. Costs can be cut and quality improved without cutting the number of graduates. Many schools should shrink. Some should go out of business.

"Our system has strengths. It boasts many top-notch schools and allows almost everyone to go to college. But mediocrity is pervasive. Because bachelor's degrees are so common, we

create more graduate degrees of dubious worth. Does anyone believe that the MBA explosion has improved management?

"You won't hear much about this from college deans or university presidents. They created this mess and are its biggest beneficiaries. Large enrollments support large faculties. More graduate students free tenured faculty from undergraduate teaching to concentrate on writing and research: the source of all status. . ."

Samuelson was not speaking particularly of California institutions in these terms, of course, but neither was anyone else.

The quality of press criticism also was diminished by a pervasive deference for California higher education. Seldom were writers critical of California higher education as an establishment (indeed, the stories frequently stressed the unusual nature of the extraordinary resources California's higher education segments represented; some of this was as inaccurate as it was parochial). Criticism was less restrained when the reports concerned flagrant actions of boards or minions, but even in these cases there was no suggestion that such acts might be symptomatic of more profound systemic deficiencies or failures.

In his book, George Kaplan offered this explanation of one of the reasons for a lack of interest in the job of education reporting: "While good reporters strive to be fair, some cannot escape a gnawing suspicion that they are consorting with authority figures, notably school officials and board members, who are not their intellectual equals."<sup>10</sup> This impression would not apply to higher education; rather, the opposite comes through. The press seems to extend to higher education administrations a positive aura not advanced to bureaucracies in other governmental sectors. In this respect, higher education administration may still be viewed as the a bastion of Weberian bureaucratic excellence—as "the most rational and efficient mode of organization for undertaking large and complex tasks."<sup>11</sup>

The result is an administrative latitude lent to higher education that is out of proportion to that extended to administrators in other

spheres. Evidence that these arrangements, accommodations, and prerogatives might not be working, represented by the discovery of special expense accounts, housing allowances, salary levels and increases, and stipends for estate planning, seem not to have prompted suspicion of the existence of systemic flaws. Rather, comparisons with the pay and perquisites of America's corporate leadership were readily offered and accepted as justifications, even though the analogy is not apt, and, in any case, such leadership hardly offers a model for emulation.

In his book, Kaplan also pointed to some of the reasons why he believes the press is not covering K-12 education as well as it should. Several would apply to higher education as well. For example, education has never been able to compete well with the more sensational news that publishers believe sells their papers: ("... Papers ... have much meatier fare to offer—compelling subjects like war, sports, politics, and entertainment—that education's bland menu can't begin to rival.")<sup>12</sup> In tabloid journalism the three r's are "rape, rot, and ruin"; it is hard for an education writer to compete with that.<sup>13</sup> But Kaplan goes on to argue that even when the press covers an important educational event, the coverage is shallow, uncritical, or both.

Referring to the media event associated with the announcement of the Bush Administration's *America 2000: An Education Strategy*, the plan "to make this land all that it should be," Kaplan noted that "The national newscasts spotlighted the new plan that Thursday evening, while the major newspapers dutifully front-paged and analyzed it the following morning. Punditry about schools hit epidemic levels on the morning and weekend talk shows. Not since the 'Education Summit' of September 1989 has a brighter spotlight shone on how our children are educated."

Then he continued with this observation: "In the excitement few of the media stars bothered to dissect the assumptions behind the ambitious new design. All agree that a bold mission was overdue. But *America 2000's* disputable

messages passed largely unnoticed: its weighty constitutional implications, its preference for private education, its uncritical alignment with profit-oriented business interests, and its barely hidden skepticism of all of public education."<sup>14</sup>

Kaplan insisted that "educational issues still beg for the thorough probing that less worthy but more glamorous subjects often receive."<sup>15</sup> He then offered this comment, which is directly germane to a leading assumption of this report.

"We may find answers to education's dilemmas in school choice, vouchers, site-based management, school-business collaboration, or a dozen other cures—but what were the questions? Are we likely to find them in interviews with professors or salaried school leaders or think-tank strategists or elected officials or foundation executives? Probably not. More than ever, it is up to the press, electronic and print, to locate education's real shortfalls and to place their dimensions in proper focus."<sup>16</sup>

Plato's description of the environment and conditions of the underground cavern that forms the setting of the Republic's Allegory of the Cave comes to mind. Newspaper readers trying to understand the enormously complex institution that higher education embodies, why it does some things and not others, or what may be the implications of its actions or non-actions in terms of the common good may be like Plato's cave dwellers, able to see the shadows cast upon the cave wall before them and hear the murmurs of the voices that echo from it, but denied an understanding of the deeper realities these shadows and echoes represent: the features, purposes, and conversations of the people traversing the track that is behind them and beyond their sight.

### The Press As Issue Discerner

While Kaplan did not directly raise it, a central question pertains to the matter of whether the higher education issues are adequately covered by the press. The problem with determining that also relates to the absence of an external standard or consensus on what should be the issues. Lacking either of those, it is not easy to determine whether the consequential higher

education issues are addressed, or, in the present case, whether those of the 1991-92 academic year were forced to the surface by the press coverage.

Some of the standard lists of higher education "issues" are not very good. The August 1992 *Chronicle for Higher Education Almanac*, for example, identifies "Nine Issues Affecting Higher Education in the United States," several of which (those marked with asterisks) were identified as contemporary and pertinent to California by legislative or CPEC participants in the underlying *Chronicle Almanac* survey. The nine issues were:

1. Tax-Exempt Bonds for College Savings\*\*
2. Prepaid Tuition Plans
3. Certification of Competence in English Language for Teaching Assistants
4. Restrictions or Taxes on Business Activities of Colleges
5. Vandalism of Animal-Research Facilities
6. Alternative Certification for School Teachers
7. Non-Education Majors for High School Teachers
8. Assessment of Students\*\*
9. Mid-Year Budget Cuts\*\*

Suppressing for a moment the temptation to shriek that the list is remarkably mundane, either the suppositions that these would represent the major concerns for the year were one finds that inaccurate as far as California was concerned (and the California respondents to the *Chronicle Almanac's* annual survey were a bit out of touch), or other more immediate stories (the budget crisis, President Gardner's retirement) drove them from the scene.

The greater likelihood is the former. The list probably would have proved inaccurate in any case, as neither student assessment nor tax-exempt bonds for college savings seem to have stimulated much interest in the state, and the list's reference to "mid-year budget cuts" does not adequately describe the pervasive nature of the budget crisis that dominated the news in

California during this period. (In any case, there was comparatively little evidence of mid-year cuts as an issue.) Whatever else, these were not California's higher education "issues," and they probably would not have been even had there been no budget crisis this year.

There also is a matter of circularity. The list is speculative, or prospective. If the same respondents were contacted again, a year later, the list of California issues probably would include those covered during the past year by the California papers. If this were so, then it could be argued that the press plays a major role in the contemporary issue identification process. Compared with the survey responses in the *Chronicle of Higher Education Almanac* which were based on the opinions of in-state experts, when it comes to issue identification, the press may be doing a better job than the governmental entities charged with anticipating change (e.g., the segmental governing boards and administrations, the statewide boards, etc.).

Unquestionably, at one level at least, the California higher education issues were those that received the most coverage in the papers. Predominantly, these concerned the effects of the budget crisis on students, faculty, and institutions (and state enrollment policies), and the issues surrounding University of California President Gardner's decision to resign and the subsequent disclosures relating to his severance package and the existence of other unusual (even for higher education) administrative salaries and perquisites.

Consensus lists such as the *Chronicle Almanac's* aside, there are other, more profound, sets of higher education issues that can be cited. Few received anything like the coverage of the more topical subjects in the newspaper stories during this year.

In a recent paper prepared for a European audience, Aims McGuinness listed the following among the higher education issues confronting national and state governments in this country (the parenthesis have been added to separate the corollary questions):

- How can the nation achieve a closer relationship between high participation rates and high educational achievement rates? (Are too many students simply being processed through higher education with no clear sense of what they should know and be able to do upon graduation? . . . Why is it taking students longer and longer to complete a baccalaureate degree? How much higher education participation is enough? Should the government set standards or expectations concerning the knowledge of graduates?)
- Should the basic structure of postsecondary education in the U.S. be altered? (Should the transition point for further education be age 16 rather than 18? Should the last two years of high school and the first two years of college be consolidated? Should research universities reduce or even drop their lower-division programs and focus more on upper-division and graduate education?)
- How should institutional forms, methods of program delivery and governance be changed to create a more responsive, cost-effective, and flexible system? (Should some large multi-campus systems such as CSU be broken up into smaller units or radically decentralized to give greater independence to individual units under a smaller central staff? Could a larger proportion of the undergraduate population be served off-campus through the use of technology?)
- Should both the sources and methods of financing for students and institutions be changed in fundamental ways?
- How must state government policy change to support the transformation of the higher education system? (Other issues on this list apply to the national level and need not be repeated here. Those cited are from "Lessons from European Integration for U.S. Higher Education," *Education Commission of the States*, September 1992).

Some of the issues particularly pertinent to

California were suggested earlier e.g., Does reverence for the master plan prevent Californians from considering fresh alternatives for the 1990s and beyond? There are others.<sup>17</sup>

- Should there be a master plan to guide the development of higher education in California?
- Should it continue to be the plan the state has? What would be the likely consequences of a "planless" higher education future?
- To what period should a master plan apply? (What considerations should govern its review and revision? What components should it comprise?)
- California's three-tiered program for allocating the higher education enrollments of graduating high school seniors is likely to prove insufficient to demands created by an improved and expanded K-12 sector. What types of institutions, therefore, should be planned and established to meet these needs?
- Should the University of California system of research universities be expanded or should the emphasis be on the CSU system?
- What, if any, adjustments in community college roles and missions might be considered with respect to meeting projected enrollment demands?
- Should ways be found for getting community colleges to accept more freshman and sophomore students?
- Is the community college performance with respect to academic preparation meeting expectations?
- Should community colleges provide some instruction at the upper-division level?
- What are the implications of cutbacks in federal research funds for California's research universities?
- What are the ramifications of such cutbacks for conventions regarding faculty productivity?

- Does it make sense to plan for more of these institutions in such an uncertain setting?
- Do research funding cutbacks offer opportunities for faculty at public research universities to allocate more time and effort to undergraduate teaching? (How could institutional and system cultures and reward structures be altered to encourage such adaptations?)
- Do present incentives adequately reflect the importance of undergraduate teaching?
- Is the preponderant role the state plays with respect to the funding of research in higher education recognized and appreciated? (Could the processes for allocating state funds for research among segments, institutions, and programs be improved?)
- Should the state encourage and assist qualified and needy students to attend private colleges and universities? (Would expanded efforts of this nature reduce the demand for new public institutions? Would this result in a savings to the state?)
- Do student fee increases in the context of state funding cuts result in students paying more for less? (Do such increases in the midst of a budget crisis indicate that fiscal rather than educational policy concerns are driving such decisions? Do such increases indicate a shift of the cost burden of higher education from the state to families and students? What are the long-range policy considerations of such changes? Do such policies square with long-range state economic development goals?)
- Are California's higher education governance structures and arrangements in need of review and revision? (Are the governing boards too insulated from state authority? Conversely, are they in danger of politicization? How might governance be improved? Are governing boards sufficiently accountable to the public for their actions?)
- Is the access-quality dichotomy specious? (Can a state have a high-quality public higher educational system that is not responsive to public needs for access? Must funding reduction proposals inevitably devolve to a choice between enrollment cuts and quality reduction? Are higher education appropriations being optimally utilized?)
- What is higher education's true potential vis-a-vis economic development? What economic development roles should be assigned to higher education and how should they be funded and monitored?

Such a list could continue for several pages more. For now, the consternation behind these questions is cogently summarized by Pat Callan (In The OECD, the Master Plan and the California Dream, Berkeley, 1992):

"For California higher education, the 1990s will provide the opportunity to build on the three decades of experience under the master plan. But it will also present enormous challenges of rapid growth, of financial constraints, of faculty turnover, of the most diverse student population in the history of American higher education and of the great societal pressures to enhance both quality and access. California appears on the verge of entering this era without a well-defined agenda, hoping to negotiate the decade of the 1990s by mechanistically replicating the policies of the 1960s."<sup>18</sup>

## Two Kinds Of Issues

By now it should be apparent that there are at least two sorts of issues. The most immediately evident might be labeled "Issues of the First Kind." These are symptomatic and obvious. They encompass the more discernible questions connected with newsworthy actions. The *Chronicle Almanac* list, above, might be a good example of these. Other examples could include university regents' management procedures, the immediate effects of budget cuts on faculty and enrollments (layoffs, course cuts, class closings), etc. In California, these might even extend to such considerations as the ostensible threats posed by funding cuts to con-

tinuation of the master plan.

"Issues of the Second Kind" involve organic considerations. These are profound and consequential and almost never immediately apparent. Examples might include such fundamental factors as the effectiveness of higher education governance forms, the case for seriously rethinking the master plan (as distinct from reflexive references to it), the state of higher education on the eve of the Third Millennium, etc.

The press does a good, often excellent, job with Issues of the First Kind. But it seems less able to sufficiently penetrate to the stratum inhabited by Issues of the Second Kind. Yet, if there is to be an informed public debate about the effectiveness and future of California higher education, widespread awareness of both forms is necessary. The reporting of the symptoms of problems, Issues of the First Kind, seems to take care of itself. It is the more profound matters, Issues of the Second Kind, that will need to be addressed if there is to be a sustained and incisive public dialogue about higher education. The press could use some help with these.

### A Few Exemplary Issues

The subjects covered by the reviewed newspaper articles offer any number of opportunities for examination of Issues of the First Kind; sometimes the resultant coverage offered glimpses at some of the issues of the second sort. If most of the coverage displayed a failure to fully exploit because of lack of pursuit, some of the better pieces are nonetheless worth considering.

In a 1,600-word article prepared by Aleta Watson and Tom Philp that appeared on Christmas Eve, 1991 in the *San Jose Mercury News* ("Cash Crunch is Squeezing Minorities out of College,") the writers argued:

"California's booming minority population is in danger of being squeezed out of its higher education system, just as the state most needs new graduates to provide the ideas and workers to propel a healthy economy into the 21st century. For three decades, California's col-

leges were a model for the world and the background of the state's prosperity. Millions of students found the key to a better life in the state's vast network of respected, low-cost schools. But hard times are fundamentally reshaping the system, and as it contracts, there are fewer spots left in it for California's most impoverished students. . . .

"With their departure may go the state's economic future, which depends on an expanding pool of educated people to perform its work and pay its taxes. . . .

"Theoretically, under California's master plan for higher education—the system's guiding force for three decades—everyone has a place . . . . But this fall, the master plan began to unravel along with the state's finances . . . .

"The crunch can only get worse as an expected wave of 700,000 new students clamors to get into college, perhaps as early as the end of the decade. California's future may depend on whether it can find room for them.

"More than half of all the new jobs created in the next decade will require some education beyond the high school . . . nearly one in three will require a college degree.

"To keep industry from moving elsewhere to find the talent to fill these jobs, California must produce this educated workforce from the very populations which traditionally have been the least likely to go to college. In 15 years, two of every three Californians working for a living will be minority members . . . .

"If those working minority groups don't have a chance to advance through affordable higher education . . . California could well face 'social apartheid' . . . ."

This story quoted numerous political and

higher education leaders on the subject, identified symptoms of the problems in each of the segments, and reviewed the statistics on participation. It was so well done that the two reporters were commended in a subsequent letter to the editor from West Valley and Mission Community College Chancellor Gustavo Mellander (an extraordinarily rare gesture). If there was a problem with the article, it was in the implied acceptance of the proposition that reduced funding must necessarily and automatically translate into increased student charges and reductions in services to students. Nevertheless, it stands as a fine example of a thought-provoking higher education story.

Another example is a November 20, 1991, story by Peter Shrag in the *Sacramento Bee*, which helped to keep the effects of the budget crisis on higher education in perspective while throwing some darts at maxims that may have become sacrosanct. This editorial, by the way, was the clearest example among the sample articles of an effort to change the course of the discourse on higher education:

"California's colleges and universities aren't alone in their troubles. Public higher education systems from one end of the country to the other are being forced to turn away students, cancel classes, and make tough choices between recession-driven budget cuts and their traditional promises to make higher education easily accessible. . .

". . . if the crisis also forces a badly needed re-examination of state educational policies, particularly in California, which was a leader in providing low-cost access to virtually everyone, it may be worthwhile. Those policies may have been unrealistic even in the prosperous years, when indefinite growth seemed to be the norm, and when it looked as if higher education could be everything for everybody. They are clearly unrealistic now. . .

"For the Legislature, the temptation will be to tinker at the edges, but if one looks at the staggering numbers that

will be inundating the colleges and the budget problems that the state is likely to have into the indefinite future, the presumptions of the old master plan badly need re-examination.

"There is no magic in these [the master's plan's allocation of entering students among the three segments], just as there is neither realism or fairness in tuition and fee structures that still subsidize the education of affluent university students, not to mention next year's lawyers and doctors, out of the taxes of people making half what their parents earn—and half of what those lawyers and doctors will make on the day they finish.

"Meanwhile, access is being denied, quality is declining, and a once-rational system turns the promises of the Master Plan into a caricature. If higher education were a little scarcer and access governed a little more by merit, students might work a little harder, a little faster, and with a little more devotion. If colleges limited admission according to merit so that they could provide all enrolled students the courses they promise, more people would finish on time and the campuses would be a little less like parking lots. A revolutionary idea."

The *Bee* displayed a willingness to poke at a few of higher education's balloons on other occasions, as represented by the following quotation from a story describing the findings of a CPEC report by Lisa Lapin ("Quality of Lower Division Instruction," March 3, 1992): "The University of California may be the Cadillac of the state's higher education system, but its freshmen and sophomores are riding in the trunk. . . And taxpayers spend more than twice as much for lower-division students at both the CSU and UC systems than to educate community college students, according to a CPEC report."

The budget crisis was not the only harbinger of campus troubles during this year. In a near-

ly-3,000 word article that ran on January 4, 1992, in the *Los Angeles Times*, Larry Gordon probed some of the difficulties of multicultural participation in higher education:

"Multiculturalism. Political correctness. Affirmative action. Ethnic studies. Separatism. Harassment. The Western tradition. Just the mention of these buzzwords is likely to provoke emotional and divisive debates at most colleges. But behind the arguments is a deeper dilemma—how to ensure minorities access to higher education while promoting ethnic harmony on campuses—and a deepening reality—that universities have become a focal point for the nation's racial tensions.

"With the strength of numbers behind them at many schools, minority students are demanding—and getting—reforms in admissions policies, financial aid, students services, faculty hiring and the handling of complaints about them. . .

"White students, who resent special admissions policies for minorities, and some faculty members, who charge that the ethnic-common, Western culture [is in danger also are uncertain]. . .

"What ultimately bothers today's critics most is not the racial or ethnic segregation of students' social lives, but the challenges that growing numbers of Asian, Latino, and African-American students pose to the faculty once they find their ancestors' histories and contributions largely ignored in the classroom,' [Troy Duster, Berkeley sociology professor] said."

The article continued with "campus portraits" of UCLA, San Francisco State, Wisconsin-Madison, and Wesleyan Universities.

Exceptional examples from the *San Francisco Chronicle* might include the following by Louis Freedberg ("Colleges Becoming Economic Casualty," November 11, 1991):

"Thirty years ago, California's leaders agreed to provide almost any student with a chance at a low-cost high-quality university education that included access to Nobel laureates and a choice of campus locations, ranging from redwood country to the desert. But the state's lingering recession has squeezed the budgets of almost every public university and community college in California—and is eroding the dream of a college education for every Californian who wants one. . .

"The current crisis has its roots in a seemingly distant era of optimism and economic growth. When the Master Plan for Higher Education was formulated in the late 1950s, only 178,000 students were enrolled in California's public universities. The cost to the state was only \$214 million. Today it has risen to over \$6 billion. . .

"Chancellor Barry Munitz says the state's educational policy is at a turning point. 'This fall we need to ask ourselves where we are and if the state can continue the commitment to the master plan,' he said. 'In my judgment that is open to question.'

"One byproduct of the current crisis is a debate on whether students from more affluent backgrounds should pay more. . .

"Some politicians hint that a college education should not be an entitlement open to all students. . ."

In an article on Stanford University that appeared a couple of months earlier, Louis Freedberg raised another issue rife with implications:

"The University, affectionately known as 'The Farm,' now faces problems that may stretch its capacities far more than the physical challenge of building a university in a once-remote California outpost. It finds itself perched on what may be another watershed in the evolution of higher education, as both private and public institutions attempt to sustain research and teaching in the face of shrinking government support. . .

"... what really pushed Stanford into the upper echelons of higher education was a massive infusion of federal research money in the 1950s and 1960s. ...

"For 40 or 50 years, there has been an increasing federalization of the best universities in this country' [Ernest Boyer] said: 'We now have a population of researchers that this economy can't sustain at the expected level.'"

If federal budget deficits bear implications for the future of Stanford University, they also bear them for those institutions in California's public higher education segments that compete for and rely upon these resources.

In the end it must be argued that articles of the caliber of these were in the minority. Most of the California newspaper coverage was more topical and commonplace. Reporting was usually shaped by breaking events and constrained by the need to stimulate reader interest. The regular course of the coverage can be illustrated by a review of the treatment of the most prominent higher education issue during this period: the unfolding effects of the state's budget crisis on higher education.

### **The Dominant Story: The Budget Crisis**

The budget crisis and its effects accounted for about 55 percent of the articles in the *Bee*, 33 percent of those in the *Times*, 42 percent of those in the *Mercury News*, and 30 percent of those in the *Chronicle* during the review period. The budget crisis generally inspired press support for the institutions and the students, and even a few supportive editorials for higher education, as predictions of such effects as increased fees, faculty layoffs, and extended terms to graduation (the result of reduced classes) presented themselves.

As noted previously, with a few conspicuous exceptions, press anxieties about the effects of funding cutbacks were limited to the quantifiable and proximate: the number of faculty members likely to be laid off, the amount by which student fees were likely to increase, the numbers of students who would not be admitted, and interviews with citizens adversely affected by these.

Once more, there were some references to such larger ramifications as the jeopardized master plan, the shift of the cost burden for higher education from the state to families (sometimes stated as a shift from "taxpayers to students"), the fading of the "California Dream"—but these rarely extended much further, and they almost always could be traced to other sources, usually the opinions of someone "in the know," e.g., the threat to the master plan noted by CSU Chancellor Barry Munitz.

The following review of budget crisis coverage by each of the four papers is intended to be illustrative of the general higher education coverage. The reporters who wrote these pieces wrote a greater number of articles on a much wider range than are excerpted here. The review opens with a brief summary of the general higher education coverage for the year. This summary is then followed by excerpts from the respective newspapers' articles about the budget situation.

### *The Sacramento Bee*

The computer search identified about 125 articles in the *Bee* during the year under review, of which 109 were considered relevant and usable. The list of discrete subjects and the frequency count for each consists of the following:

1. Budget Crisis: 60
  - Crisis Generally (18)
  - Tuition Increases (18)
  - Teaching Loads and Faculty Salaries (7)
  - Maintaining Access (5)
  - Administrative Salaries and Perks (4)
  - Reducing Time to Degree (3)
  - Cutting Costs (2)
  - Full Costs second Degree (2)
  - Educational Quality (1)
2. President Gardner's Retirement and Replacement: 7
3. Minority Participation: 13
  - In Higher Education Jobs (2)
  - Admissions (3)
  - Participation (2)
  - Student Financial Aid (6)
4. Student Aid: 7
  - Generally (5)
  - Loan Defaults (2)

5. Miscellaneous: 23  
 Master Plan Review (1)  
 CC Role (1)  
 Facility Bonds (5)  
 Political Correctness (2)  
 Stanford Overhead (1)  
 NCAA Eligibility (1)  
 Other (12)

Most of the higher education coverage was developed by the *Bee* staff itself. Approximately three-quarters of the articles originated at the paper. Wire services contributed about 14 percent, and Op-Ed pieces accounted for about eight percent. A number of the Op-Ed pieces were written by higher education or political figures in California (e.g., Robert Revinus, Community College Board of Governors member, on community college roles in work force training and educating the citizenry; the president pro tem of the senate, on the budget crisis and education).

Some Forum (included with Op-Ed here) articles were reprinted from the *Chronicle for Higher Education* (e.g., "Politics and Teaching," by Gerald Graff, faculty member at the University of Chicago). The *Bee* was exemplary in its publication of such material. If Op-Ed and editorials are combined, the distribution among the usable articles is about 70 percent news and 30 percent opinion. The editorials, per se (excluding Forum and Op-Ed pieces) dealt with:

- Federal student aid policy (the *Bee* was against earmarking scholarships for minorities, arguing that the issue was not race but income—a white student from a working class family would have greater need for assistance than the scion of a wealthy black physician);
- The quality of California government (which the *Bee* felt was very high);
- Proportional minority representation in every field ("an idea that is both alluring and dangerous"—this also permitted another attack on federal student aid policy);
- Faculty teaching loads (too low, especially at UC);

- Reduced access because of the budget crunch (which caused the *Bee* to support tuition increases—accompanied by additional financial aid—as a necessary source of revenue—as cited above, the *Bee* also argued that California's commitment to low-cost higher education for everyone, while worthwhile, was unrealistic—the budget crunch would force a desirable re-examination);
- The NCAA eligibility rule change ("encouraging because it increases the chance that athletes will actually get an education" and because it reflects the increasing influence of presidents in the organization);
- President Gardner's replacement (the *Bee* was mildly critical of assertions that Chancellor Peltason was neither a compromise choice nor an interim president, although appreciative of his qualifications);
- President Gardner's pay and perks (In "The Scandal in Academia," the *Bee* noted that these Chancellor Reynolds' and her senior administrators' abuses—were hardly unprecedented);
- Congressional pork to universities; and
- Initiative 153, construction bonding which the *Bee* described as, "straightforward and urgent."

Like most of the other observations of this report, this one also is subjective, but the *Bee's* editorial positions on higher education issues were generally thoughtful and reasoned, although one might not always agree with the position taken.

In terms of frequency of articles on various higher education segments, 13 articles applied to both the UC and CSU; for the most part these addressed the effects of the budget crisis. Two articles pertained to all three systems, with the community colleges included. The UC system or one of its institutions drew the greatest number of articles—25 (UC generally, 18; UC-Davis, 5; UC-Berkeley, 2). Much of this was prompted by the Gardner retirement phenome-

non. Most of these articles were critical (administrative pay and perks, regents' actions, lower-division instruction, faculty teaching loads, etc.).

Twenty-one articles were devoted to the CSU system or one of its institutions (18 to the system generally, two to CSU-Sacramento; one to CSU-Chico). These articles were generally supportive. Only three articles were directed to the community college system. The *Bee* had two articles on Stanford and one each on Mills and the University of the Pacific during the review period.

In Sacramento as well as the other three cities, the budget crisis dominated the news by virtually any standard.<sup>18</sup> The *Bee's* coverage of budget-related higher education issues, consisting of a combination of original stories, editorials, and wire stories was extensive and often well done. The *Bee* writers seemed a bit more willing than some at other papers to hint at the possibility that longer-ranged policy implications might be associated with the budget crisis. An editorial appearing on May 31, 1992, "Colleges in Lean Times," is worth pausing for a quote:

"By now it's a virtual certainty that California's colleges and universities, faced by the massive budget cuts that will afflict all state public services, will eliminate still more classes and programs and thus further reduce student access to higher education.

"The only question is whether that will be done rationally and fairly or whether, in the effort to dodge responsibility or protect perks, the state's politicians and academics will let confusion and eroding academic quality become the instrument of triage. [The editorial supports fee increases and then continues with recommendations to raise admission requirements at the universities—that the University of California take only the top 10 or 11 percent of high school graduates; Cal State the top 30 percent], upgrade funding for community colleges and

broaden transfer agreements, create alternative paths to careers [apprenticeship programs], speed up time to graduation at UC, require faculty to streamline and prune curricula [return to some semblance of general education for the first two years], require UC faculty to teach more, begin to challenge conventional teaching approaches [closed circuit TV to all campuses], replace the University of California Board of Regents with people of broader vision, re-examine the salary and generous benefit structure for all senior university professors.

"The list could be extended indefinitely. But the details don't matter so much as the principle. . . . To do nothing ensures a continuing erosion of quality and mocks the promise that admission implies."

If the implications of other *Bee* articles were not pursued to a comparable degree, readers were at least apprised of the fact that some troubling associations were present, and, on balance, the *Bee* would have to receive high marks for its coverage of this issue. The following excerpts are illustrative.

"In 1988, the UC proclaimed it needed up to three new campuses by the year 2005 because of surging enrollments . . . . But rather than expanding, California's colleges and universities have been cutting classes, laying off professors, raising fees, and turning down students in record numbers because of a statewide budget crisis. . . . On Monday, the CPEC will wrestle with the issue during a day-long meeting at the Capitol. . . . One measure that could relieve funding problems for the community colleges is a constitutional amendment sponsored by Jack O'Connell. The measure would allow school and community college districts to pass local bond measures with a majority rather than two-thirds vote." (Deb Kollars, "Tough Times for Colleges in California," Sept. 13, 1991).

"Nobody doubts that California's public colleges and universities are being squeezed by budget shortages and that many students are

being caught in the crunch. For many frustrated students, required classes are overcrowded or not available at all, even while tuition is going up. As a result, eight California State University campuses have decided not to accept new students in the spring, rather than take them in and leave them without the courses they need.

"But at the same time, there are troubling reports, both from faculty members and from statewide higher education officials at the CPEC, of something else: that while classes are getting more crowded and teachers are being laid off, the number of classes taught by the average faculty member at the UC and at CSU as well, rather than going up, may still be going down" (Editorial, "The Non-Teaching Professor," Sept. 22, 1991).

"CSU officials put out a harsh warning Friday that budget problems could hurt the quality of education and force the school system to turn away students next year" (Associated Press, "CSU System May Bar Doors," Oct. 26, 1991).

"All segments of California's \$8.4 billion higher education system . . . are sending similar messages: unless there is more money, either qualified students will be denied access or the quality of the programs will decline, or both," (Editorial, Nov. 4, 1991).

"In a rare, nasty spat, two of California's top ranking higher education officials on Friday discarded their gentlemanly academic decorum to engage in a public rhetorical battle over money, students, and academic egos.

"UC President David P. Gardner ignited the spat when, before the UC Board of Regents, he charged state community colleges Chancellor David Mertes with wanting to steal away UC students," (Lisa Lapin, "Educators . . . Budgets," Jan. 18, 1992).

"The UC regents approved a 24 percent student fee increase with little debate Friday, triggering a massive student protest and takeover of the UC Davis auditorium where the regents voted," (Lisa Lapin, "UC Students . . . Fees," Jan. 18, 1992).

"California's skyrocketing college fees are squeezing much of its middle class out of the classroom—and leaving many of those remaining heavily in debt on the day they receive their diplomas.

"The number of students from families making \$30,000 to \$45,000 dropped by 20 percent at UC campuses and 17 percent in the CSU system between 1982 and 1988, according to a November report of the CPEC. The number of families in that income bracket, however, increased by 21 percent statewide" (Aleta Watson Knight, "College . . . Rise," Jan. 21, 1992).

"Holly Keefer is a single welfare mother of three and an honors physics major at UCD. Her degree, Keefer says, is her only way out of the welfare system. It's valuable enough that she has taken out \$8,000 in student loans and feeds her children off of food stamps. But a \$550 hike in UC fees next year, without an increase in state financial aid, would be her breaking point," (Lisa Lapin, "University . . . Protest," Jan. 22, 1992).

"While CSU students stand in line to get scarce classes and are forced to postpone graduating, the faculty has quietly been promised a lighter classroom teaching load. At the UC, where students' cost of education is 79 percent higher than 10 years ago, faculty members teach an average of three or four classes a year" (Peter Shrag, "Toward . . . Fees," Jan. 29, 1992).

"As the debate escalates over the increasing costs of attending California's public universities, faculty members—and their salaries and work habits—are for the first time being subject to legislative and student scrutiny. Long immune from budget cuts, there is now greater pressure for faculty members to share the burden," (Lisa Lapin, "Faculty's . . . Light?," Jan. 31, 1992).

"Defending a proposal to raise student fees at the CSUs by 40 percent next fall, Chancellor Barry Munitz told lawmakers Tuesday that 26,000 students could be turned away without the extra funding" (Lisa Lapin, "CSU . . . Nightmares," Feb. 1992).

"California is abandoning its historic commitment to provide a low-cost, high-quality college education for all of its residents—risking its economic future, the state's top university and college officials warned Wednesday. . . . In an unusual joint appearance at the Capitol, Gardner, Munitz, and community college Chancellor David Mertes were in rare agreement: California's method of funding higher education is woefully inadequate" (Lisa Lapin, "Colleges . . . Funds," Feb. 13, 1992).

"The Master Plan for higher education is one of the remnants of the expansive era. Enacted in 1960, it epitomizes the broad promises of first-rate public services that were characteristic of the era. The plan, which was reviewed but left largely unchanged in the 1980s, essentially guarantees every Californian who desires a postsecondary education, some access. . . . What may be needed is a top-to-bottom overhaul of the master plan, based on new political, social, and fiscal realities—one that doesn't assume higher education is for everyone, more strenuously steers lower-division students into cost-effective community colleges, requires more teaching effort by university professors, . . . and recognizes that even with the recent fee increases, UC and State University educations still are bargains and massive subsidies to future upper middle-class Californians" (Dan Walters, "A Harder . . . College Plan," Feb. 2, 1992).

"Students at California's public universities are promising to boycott classes and campus businesses as part of a spring offensive that is being touted as the most organized student uprising since the early 1970s" (Lisa Lapin, "UC, CSU . . . Boycotts" Feb. 24, 1992).

"Protesting students temporarily shut down the Capitol Monday in a long afternoon of confrontation in which California's higher education systems were blasted from several directions. . . . Both the students and the analysts echoed the same sentiment: Taxpayers and students should get more for their money by forcing faculty to spend more time teaching and by forcing colleges to be more efficient" (Lisa Lapin, "Higher Education . . . Blasted," Feb. 25, 1992).

"For undergraduates, research has meant less contact with professors, longer and more crowded lectures, and a feeling of alienation. This not-so-hidden cost of research is prompting the UC system to do some soul-searching. The goal is a new balance that emphasizes good teaching along with research" (Lisa Lapin, "Higher Education . . . Blasted," Feb. 25, 1992).

"The fee increases [students] face are steep in percentage terms, and should be cushioned by proportional increases in student aid for those who need it. But when they claim that the state budget is being balanced on the backs of students, as one student leader put it, they are simply blowing smoke. . . . When the students claim that university professors should teach more, they are half right. Teaching loads at the UC are, for the most part, embarrassingly low, even if one takes into account the other responsibilities—research, public service, faculty committee work—of the average faculty member. But at the CSUs, that's not the case" (Editorial, "Rising Student Costs . . ." Feb. 25, 1992).

"After many years of neglecting the issue, budget-conscious lawmakers have begun pressuring California's universities to move students in and out like clockwork again" (Lisa Lapin, "Colleges . . . Graduation," Mar. 1, 1992).

"The state should provide additional financial aid so that genuinely needy students won't be further damaged by these increases, something it has failed to do so far. But to vote against fee increases without finding other money that's not available this year does nothing but damage the same students that the vote against the fee increases purports to help" (Editorial, "Listen to Munitz," Mar. 4, 1992).

"Recent decisions by lawmakers to restrict university budgets and increase teaching loads could destroy the research reputation of the UC, the [chancellor of UC Davis] said Monday" (Lisa Lapin, "Push to Boost Faculty Workload Called Threat to UC," Mar. 17, 1992).

"Governor Wilson on Wednesday promised to veto legislation that would put a cap on student fees at California's public universities,

heightening a political battle over higher education, especially in the area of public colleges. . . .  
Mar. 19, 1992).

"A package of higher education reform bills that would have increased out-of-state tuition and charged full price for second degrees at California's public colleges failed to pass out of an Assembly committee Tuesday. . . . Only one significant bill passed out of the Assembly's higher education committee on Tuesday—legislation asking UC's faculty to teach more classes a year. They presently teach an average of five classes per year. The legislation would ask that they teach six, or two per quarter" (Lisa Lapin, "Tuition/Charges. . . Degree," Apr. 8, 1992).

"The state assembly, fearing political retribution from students and their parents, won't approve the 40 percent fee increases that the CSU badly needs to maintain its programs. But it won't take responsibility for cutting programs either. If rejecting the fee increases requires the university to further restrict access to classes, and if it further erodes the quality of courses and other services at CSU, the members of the assembly can then pretend it's the university's fault" (Editorial, "Chamber of Irresponsibility," May 5, 1992).

"CSU Sacramento is facing budget cuts of at least \$10 million this fall—and the likelihood it will have to turn away thousands of students, cut hundreds of classes, and lay off dozens of faculty, President Donald Gerth announced today" (Lisa Lapin, "SAC . . . Cuts. . .," May 13, 1992).

"For nearly two hours Thursday, the state's higher education leaders dramatized the impact of a 25 percent cut in their budgets, sketching scenarios ranging from cancellation of school semesters to the closure of entire campuses. In all likelihood, they admitted, the cuts would not result in such drastic measures. [But Gardner was reported later as saying] 'A 25 percent cut . . . represents the entire state-funded budget for four of our nine campuses, Irvine, Riverside, San Francisco, and Santa Barbara'" (Norman Williams, "University . . . Restraint," June 5, 1992).

"Chancellor Munitz said Friday the CSU system would send layoff notices to 2,200 employees, including an unprecedented 340 tenured or tenure-track faculty, in anticipation of an 8 percent budget cut. . . . An 8 percent cutback would cause an enrollment decline of 40,000 students statewide, he said" (John Cox, "CSU . . . 2000," June 6, 1992).

"In a major change of California's historic policy of open access to community colleges, the board of governors authorized Chancellor Mertes to work out a budget compromise that could include fee increases for the 1.5 million students who attend the 160 community colleges.

"[Mertes said the \$220 million less than originally expected] is not enough to maintain open enrollment. We will be forced to establish a priority system for admissions. . . ." (Lisa Lapin, "Two-Year . . . Standards," June 6, 1992).

"It may wind up as part of California's colorful legislative lore, one of those time markers where people later ask, 'What were you doing the day they. . . ?' The day they jettisoned tenured professors from state colleges and universities. . . . For 33 years, James Gregg has introduced college freshman at CSU Chico to American politics in one of the most popular classes on campus. Gregg, 65, thought he'd retire honorably. But with three years to go, Gregg was fired last week, one of 2,200 tenured and part-time faculty in the CSU system who will be laid off if state budget cuts hit eight percent or higher" (Michael Wagner, "Painful Choices. . .," June 14, 1992).

"Professors are likely to do more teaching and campus administrators face hefty pay cuts under a legislative proposal to slash funding to California's public higher education system during the budget crisis. Student fees also are certain to rise" (Lisa Lapin, "Legislative . . . Plan," June 23, 1992).

"Worried about the prospect of canceled classes and higher fees next fall, record numbers of students have decided to spend this summer in the libraries and lecture halls of California's colleges and universities" (Lisa Lapin, "Summer School a Hot Item. . .," June 28, 1992).

### *The Los Angeles Times*

In all, 160 *Los Angeles Times* articles were considered substantive with respect to higher education. The *Times* articles tended to be more lengthy than those of the other newspapers. One article was nearly 10,000 words in length. Several were over 5,000, and 1,000-word articles were common.

The budget crisis dominated the material on higher education. The various topics in the news articles (152 in number, exclusive of editorials), with their frequency in the *Times* this year, were as follows:

1. Budget Crisis: 54
  - In General (7)
  - Tuition Increases (13)
  - Effect on Admissions (10)
  - Effect on Cal State (19)
  - Effect on Athletics at Cal State (3)
  - Faculty Cuts (2)
2. Minority Issues: 13
3. Administrative Hires and Retirements: 12
4. Soka University: 11
5. Higher Education Bond Issues: 8
6. Profiles of HE Figures: 8
7. Federal Student Financial Aid Policy: 6
8. Various Op-Ed Pieces: 5
9. Program Profiles: 5
10. Gardner's Retirement Package: 4
11. NCAA Eligibility: 4
12. Higher Fees for Illegal Aliens: 3
13. Higher Education Research: 3
14. Cal State Ventura County Campus: 3
15. Community Colleges: 2
16. Miscellaneous: 11
  - University of California (1)
  - K-12/Higher Education Bridge Program (1)
  - Kissinger Speech (1)
  - Board Appointment (1)
  - Cal Tech Profile (1)
  - Costs Generally (1)
  - Attrition (1)
  - Cheating (1)
  - UC San Diego (1)
  - Stanford Fee Increase (1)
  - Cal State Santa Monica (1)

The remaining eight pieces were editorials, dealing, one each, with the following:

- A Cal State Faculty Initiative (Favorable)
- Private Colleges (Cal Grants) (Support)
- Bond Issue (Support)
- Peltason (Well Wishes)
- Cal State Budget (Concerned)
- Minority Participation (Support)
- Federal Student Financial Aid Policy (On The Right Track)
- Effects of Budget Cuts on Admissions (Concerned)

The editorial-to-news article ratio in the *Times* (8:152) was lower than was the case with the *Bee* (10:99).<sup>20</sup> As with the *Bee*, the *Times* occasionally printed thoughtful Op-Ed articles from contributors—college presidents, student leaders, trustees, etc. The *Bee* also devoted more articles to the Gardner Retirement embroglio than did the *Times*. Almost a third of the *Times*' articles concerned the budget, most of which, as noted below, related to Cal State and its member—especially Southern California—institutions.

The *Times* also allocated considerable space to the Soka University/Tom Hayden confrontation, an issue that was not pursued by the other papers.

The *Times* did not devote much coverage to the UC system (surprisingly, there were no *Times* articles about UCLA, although there were a couple about UC San Diego); the number of articles on Cal State was much greater (note the high frequency of *Times*' articles concerned about the effects of the budget crisis on Cal State).

The *Times* also published several editorials on the budget's effects on higher education. These contrasted in tone and measure with those appearing in the *Bee*. The *Times*' editorials suggested a sense of frustration that contrasted with the more outraged style of the *Bee* writers.

With respect to its news story coverage of the higher educational effects of the budget crisis, the *Times*' coverage was pretty straightforward, with events addressed as they occurred. While some of the longer-ranged implications of the cuts on the future of California were considered, the unstated assumptions behind those

implications—e.g., whether or not the systems were already operating at optimal efficiency—were not probed. Perhaps the most surprising aspect of the *Times*' coverage of the budget was the extent to which it applied to the Cal State and, to a lesser degree, the community college, systems.

The following excerpts are from articles addressing the budget crisis in the *Los Angeles Times*.

"The increased demand for admissions to community colleges is seen as a direct result of the recession, state budget cuts and simultaneous fee increases at both the UC and CSU systems. Yet, it comes at a time when most of the two-year colleges also are having to reduce classes, services, and even staff due to reduced state funding" (Kristina Lindgren, "Jammed Road to Higher Education," Aug. 8, 1991).

"At Cal State and community colleges around the state, hundreds of professors, mainly part-timers, have been laid off and thousands of classes have been canceled. Moreover, with the impact of recession and large fee increases at UC and CSU, students are scrambling for cheaper classes at already crowded community colleges. An educational gridlock appears certain to delay graduation and shut some students out altogether" (Larry Gordon, "Budgets . . . Courses," Aug. 25, 1991).

"The budget crisis at SDSU is going to get worse before it gets better, and some tenured faculty layoffs are possible next spring, President Thomas Day said today" (David Smollar, "SDSU President Warns that more Cutbacks are Coming," Aug. 26, 1991).

"If there is a silver lining, it can be found in the classroom. There, teachers and students meet face to face. At CSU Fullerton, to cite just one campus, faculty members and department chairmen are rolling up their sleeves: classes designed for only 50 are accommodating 125; teachers are taking on, almost cheerfully, a heavier teaching load."

"These days, one hears often enough of professors who put research ahead of students. Here, by contrast, is a touch of campus heroism

—the resolve to make do. Sacramento, buffeted with its own unattractive budget choices, must come to terms with this important building block of California's future, the Cal State system. But the 'can-do' spirit of faculty in a trying new semester is a hopeful sign" (Editorial, "Stand Up and Deliver. . ." Sept. 9, 1991).

"Reacting dramatically to a continuing budget crunch, CSULB and Cal Poly Pomona will not enroll any new freshmen or lower-division transfers for this academic year after the fall term" (Larry Gordon, "Cal State's Campuses Limit Rolls," Sept. 11, 1991).

"Until very recently, UC Irvine was one of a few UC campuses that accepted virtually all student transfers. But this year's budget crunch has changed that, and now UCI cannot accommodate about 4,000 students wanting to transfer.

"The idea that all who want to go to college is no longer necessarily a given. This constitutes a disturbing erosion of the California dream. . .

"In the past, these state institutions of higher education have held out special promise. They will continue to do that, of course, but this autumn especially, something seems to have eroded in the equation that has made California special. The new academic year begins, but not on an entirely auspicious note" (Editorial, "College Education Threatened," Sept. 21, 1991).

"CSUDH, which just five years ago was struggling to attract students, is considering an unprecedented cap on enrollment next year to keep class sizes under control" (Anthony Millican, "University . . . Enrollment," Oct. 17, 1991).

"The promise for a place in a public college, university, or community college for every qualified California student—the linchpin of the state's Master Plan for Higher Education for the last 30 years—is in jeopardy" (William Trombley, "Colleges Running Out of Space, Money," Oct. 18, 1991).

"Most of Orange County's eight community colleges are bursting at the seams this fall,

thanks to the combined effects of the recession, population growth, higher costs and fewer classes at UC and CSU campuses" (Kristina Lindgren, "Local College Squeezed by Less Funding, More Students," Oct. 18, 1991).

"Officials of the 20-campus CSU system requested a 7 percent increase in state funds for next year, warning that anything less will lead to enrollment limits or a drop in quality" (Larry Gordon, "CSU Seeks Budget Increase of \$118 Million," Oct. 26, 1991).

"CSU Northridge is preparing letters notifying 29 part-time instructors that they either will not have jobs next semester, or they will have their hours reduced" (Meyerene Barker, "CSUN Plans Cuts, Layoffs of Part-Time Instructors," Dec. 5, 1991).

"The state's Master Plan for higher education may have to be abandoned if budget cuts continue, David Weiss, student government president at CSN told a rally protesting the lay-off of part-time instructors at the campus. . . . The master plan has become unrealistic, Trustee Gary Shansby said" ("Education in Jeopardy, Rally Told," Dec. 7, 1991).

"In another bizarre twist for its struggling football program, CSULB announced Tuesday that there will be no team next season, although it may be brought back in 1993 to play at a lower, less expensive level" (Paul McLeod, "Whistle Blows on 49er Football," Dec. 11, 1991).

"California public school and community college educators were delighted by the favorable treatment they received in the 1992-93 budget proposal the Governor unveiled, but public university systems had mixed feelings" (Larry Gordon, "Plan Boosts School Funding," Jan. 10, 1992).

"Prompting a massive student demonstration that led to five arrests, the UC Board of Regents on Friday voted to raise annual undergraduate fees next year by 24 percent, or \$550" (Larry Gordon, "UC Regents Raise Student Fees \$550. . .," Jan. 18, 1992).

"Amid a rising chorus of complaints over steep state university fee increases, a sliding

scale based on students' ability to pay was proposed on Tuesday by the chairman of the Assembly Higher Education Committee" (Jerry Gillam, "Sliding Scale of College Fees Urged by Hayden," Jan. 22, 1992).

"CSU students on Friday used an Assembly committee hearing at CSULB to cut administrators' salaries, increase faculty workloads, or find other alternatives to raising student fees next year" ("Panel on Cal State Urged not to Increase Fees," Jan. 25, 1992).

"Since fee hikes were approved by both systems, a rash of demonstrations has erupted statewide. The protests have involved a relatively small percentage of students, but still have taken some campuses by surprise" (Larry Gordon, "Fee Increases Stir Wave of Activism. . .," Feb. 6, 1992).

"California is spending a smaller proportion of its revenue on higher education every year, threatening the state's promise to provide quality education beyond high school for all who seek it, the leaders of the three public higher education systems warned Wednesday" (William Trombley, "Spending Dip Called Threat to Education Finances," Feb. 13, 1992).

"The wild card in the California higher education deck is the forgotten independent sector, which grants one-third of all four-year degrees in the state . . . their potential capacity available to California residents must be considered in statewide planning. We think the time for consideration is now. . . full funding for Cal Grant and modest expansion of UC graduate education strike as the right educational triage" (Editorial, "How to Help Public Colleges . . .," Feb. 17, 1992).

"Slashing courses and laying off faculty does not make for a better education. There is now talk statewide of Cal State University student groups staging a protest in Sacramento. What the future holds in the way of student protests will depend greatly on what the trustees' finance committee decides to do today in Long Beach" (Nancy Luna, "Lowering the Boom on Higher Education," Feb. 19, 1992).

"The proposed 40 percent student fee

increases at Cal State University has encountered stiff opposition in the legislature, leading Cal State officials to warn that they may have to eliminate more classes and lay off additional staff members next year" (William Trombley, "CSU Fee Hike Opposed in Legislature," Mar. 2, 1992).

"Without student fee increases, a greater share of state tax money or some combination of both, there will be fewer students and fewer classes as well as staff salaries that fail to keep up with the cost of living, Barry Munitz said" (David Smollar, "CSU Chancellor Gives Bleak Lesson," Mar. 13, 1992).

"State university students do not appreciate the courage it took for the CSU Board of Trustees to approve a 40 percent fee increase for the next academic year, and Democratic lawmakers are trying to capitalize on the students' short-sightedness, Governor Pete Wilson said Wednesday. . . a student leader said Wilson's attitude was condescending" (Times, David Weintraub, "Wilson Lauds Trustees for CSU Fee Hike," Mar. 19, 1992).

"CSU chancellor Munitz warned that if we get the kinds of budgets now being discussed by the legislature and administration, one of the system's 20 campuses will be closed" (William Trombley, "Chancellor Warns of CSU Closings," Apr. 29, 1992).

"SDSU will probably lay off 100 tenured professors and other faculty members this fall as the university struggles with an estimated \$11 million cut in the funding needed to maintain services, President Day announced" (Lisa Omphroy, "SDSU Expects to Lose 100 Tenured Jobs," May 13, 1992).

"Three men's athletic teams and one women's team at San Diego State University fell victim to budget cuts taking place throughout the Cal State system" (Alan Drooz, "SDSU to Trim Four Teams," May 20, 1992).

"About 200 San Diego University students left for Sacramento to meet with state legislators in an attempt to prevent expected budget cuts in higher education" ("Students Take Protest to Capitol," May 26, 1992).

"The ripple effect from the budget problems battering Cal State University Northridge and the Cal State system will impose unprecedented problems next year on already overburdened Community Colleges, administrators said" (Josh Meyer, "Overburdened Two-Year Colleges Brace for Worst," May 27, 1992).

"The academic senate at SDSU has asked that no further eliminations of professors and departments be made should President Tom Day be forced to go beyond the 8 percent in cuts, about 11.5 million, already announced May 13. . . instead they recommended cuts in specified non-academic areas" (David Smollar, "SDSU Senate Urges End to Academic Cuts," June 3, 1992).

"A task force is expected to make public today its annual recommendations on how the university should cope with the state's worsening budget crisis. If history is a barometer, sports is likely to be targeted once more" (Paul McLeod, "CSULB Athletics Budget Facing Another Potential Squeeze Play," June 4, 1992).

"Fearing massive cancellation of fall classes that could delay their graduations, students are enrolling in summer school in large numbers. Tenured faculty are torn between possible salary give backs or seeking longtime colleagues laid off. Campus presidents, who are meeting today in Long Beach on painful plans for an anticipated 8 percent dip in general fund funds, are worried about cuts as much as three times that large" (Larry Gordon, "CSU Bracing for Huge Budget Cuts," June 5, 1992).

"America is about to destroy its edge. At a grim news conference Friday, Barry Munitz . . . spelled out the consequences of an 8 percent cut for the system. . . They are nothing less than staggering. . . One thing is clear, California's decline is at hand. . .

"Governor Pete Wilson has imposed a panicky gag order on the relevant officials in his administrations, forbidding them to testify before a key legislative committee on the impact of the proposed cuts. But Californians need to know whose throats are about to be split. Collectively, those throats are the life of the state." (Editorial, "Strangling Our Future:

CSU Facing Devastating Cut in Funds," June 6, 1992).

"Californians can no longer assume that their children can aspire to attend one of our public universities. In the next two weeks, legislators and administrators, faced with the state's whopping budget crisis, plan to raise student fees, chop departments, slice budgets, and fire hundreds of faculty. Before long, access to California's public universities will be sharply limited and higher education will become a privilege for the few" (Ruth Rosen, UC Davis Professor of History, Op-Ed, "Trashing of the Public University," June 7, 1992).

"To Cal State University Northridge administrators and faculty . . . what hangs in the balance as the state prepares to make the largest budget cuts in its history is nothing less than the shape and priorities of the nearly 30,000 student university, which had been among the CSU system's fastest growing" (Jocelyn Stewart, "California State University Northridge Forced to Re-Evaluate its Mission in the Face of Cuts," June 15, 1992).

"Few things matter more to the long-term health of CA's economy than what's happening now to the sprawling CSU system. . . . What happens at CSU will reverberate throughout the economy for years to come" (Daniel Akst, "Cal State Budget Cuts are Bad for Business," June 16, 1992). [Note: This was a particularly thoughtful *Times* article that not only addressed ramifications but criticized CSU for mistakes of the past—not the least of which was maintaining unrealistically low fees.]

"The most heated debate on the Cal State University Northridge campus these days is not over the ethics of abortion, the practicality of fusion power, or the origin of man. Rather, it is the propriety of spending \$3.8 million on the 18 sports teams that make up the Cal State University Northridge athletic department" (Sam Enriquez, "State Cuts Could Reach Tenured Faculty at Cal State University Northridge," June 28, 1992).

"The state's worsening budget crisis means that tenured faculty may follow part-time instructors to the chopping block, and that

some academic disciplines may have to shut down altogether. . . . The scenario changed when Governor Wilson said he would not back down from his proposal to cut spending on higher education by 11 percent. Cal State University Northridge officials had been expecting an 8 percent cut and that fees would go up by 40 percent" (Sam Enriquez, "Governor Wilson's 11 percent Budget Reduction. . .," June 28, 1992).

### *San Francisco Chronicle*

During the review year there were 74 applicable articles on higher education in the *Chronicle*. The subjects and their frequency were:

1. Budget Matters: 14
  - Generally (3)
  - San Francisco State (1)
  - UC System (2)
  - UC/Cal State Systems (3)
  - Community Colleges (1)
  - Cal State (3)
2. Minority Participation, Affirmative Action, etc.: 10
  - Cultural Awareness, UC Berkeley (2)
  - Affirmative Action Generally (4)
  - Minority Participation UC (2)
  - Minority Participation Mills (1)
  - Racism on Campus (1)
3. Rising Tuition and Fees: 9
  - Generally (4)
  - Nationally (1)
  - UC Berkeley (1)
  - UC (2)
  - Stanford (1)
4. Gardner Pay and Retirement: 7
5. Stanford: 7
  - Overhead Scandal (2)
  - Budget Problems (1)
  - President (4)
6. Student Financial Aid: 5
  - Federal Policy (4)
  - Student Loan Defaults (1)
7. Private Higher Education in California: 4
8. Higher Education Administrator Pay, Perks, and Turnover: 4
9. Proposition 153 Bond Issue: 3
10. Access: 2
  - Generally (1)
  - Cal State and UC (1)

- 11. Miscellaneous (9)
  - Political Correctness (1)
  - UC President (1)
  - Higher Education Funding Generally (1)
  - Lingua Franca Magazine* (1)
  - National Collegiate Athletic Association (1)
  - Disabled Student Program (1)
  - Milken gift to UC Berkeley (1)
  - UC Research (1)
  - UC Berkeley Program (1)

Virtually all of these were news articles (as distinct from editorials), some of which were imported from out of town. There were only two editorials, both of which were identical *Chronicle* election endorsements, on which support for Proposition 153 was indicated. There was one Op-Ed piece by the president of Dominican College arguing that there should be a sliding scale (based on family income) for tuition (fees) for public universities in the state.

One reporter, Louis Freedberg, accounted for 31 of the 74 pieces (42 percent). The *Chronicle's* coverage of higher education, while selective and comparatively parsimonious in terms of the number of articles, was generally quite good. The *Chronicle*, for example, identified the trend to shifting the costs of public college education onto families and away from taxpayers pretty early and stayed with it.

Like the other papers, the *Chronicle* often pointed to the implications for the master plan of the state's inability to maintain access, but the references were limited to the tiered admissions system and not pursued. (As with the other papers, Chancellor Munitz was the usual source of the reference to the master plan.) In one case the *Chronicle* did go a bit beyond this, as in an article by Louis Freedberg: "The report's [Department of Education's report on graduating high school seniors] findings suggest that the state is on a collision course between the rising number of students who qualify for college admission and the waning ability of the state to serve them. . . . The inescapable demographic and educational trends outlined in the report could require a radical revision of the state's landmark master plan. . . ."

The *Chronicle* also displayed some segmen-

tal preferences in its reporting. The UC was the subject of 24 articles. This compared with nine for CSU (four of which it shared with UC), eight for Stanford, and one for the community colleges. There were four articles in which private higher education (exclusive of Stanford) was the subject. The University of California or Berkeley, therefore, accounted for about a third of this year's higher education coverage (most of which, again, stemmed from the Gardner retirement package issue). The UC or UC Berkeley alone was the subject of about 18 percent.

The following excerpts are from articles concerned with the budget crisis in the *San Francisco Chronicle*.

"A \$17.1 million budget cut has forced the San Francisco State University to cut 300 classes and eliminate 250 faculty positions at the campus of 27,500 students. More cuts are expected next semester" (Yasmin Amwar, "10,000 line up at SFS. . .," Aug. 28, 1991).

"The unusually steep tuition increases and lessened state support are not just the passing consequences of a recession. Rather, these are the latest signs of a sea change in the way politicians view higher education. For the foreseeable future, governors and legislators will continue to shift the cost of public college education onto families, and away from taxpayers" (Associated Press, "College Tuitions Soar. . .," Sept. 9, 1991).

"The state's budget crisis has clouded the future of the UC's proposed 10th campus, raising serious questions about how the university will handle rapidly increasing enrollments during the next decade" (Louis Freedberg, "State Money Problems Shelve Plans for New UC Campus," Sept. 14, 1991).

"Students hoping for a rollback of this year's unprecedented 40 percent increase in fees at the UC are likely to be disappointed when the Board of Regents unveils its proposed 92-93 budget at a meeting in LA today" (Louis Freedberg, "UC Budget Plan Dims Hope for Rollback of Big Fee Increase," Oct. 17, 1991).

"The concept of open access is in jeopardy in

CA. . . The current crisis has its roots in a seemingly distant era of optimism and economic growth. When the Master Plan was formulated in the late 1950s, only 178,000 students were enrolled. . . . This fall we have to see where we are and if we can continue the commitment to the master plan (cited Munitz) . . . One byproduct of the current crisis is the debate on whether students from affluent backgrounds should pay more" (Louis Freedberg, "Colleges Becoming Economic Casualty," Nov. 11, 1991).

"Students at the nine UC campuses will almost certainly pay higher fees next fall as a result of a deepening budget crisis that is expected to have a dramatic impact on the state's higher education system" (Louis Freedberg, "Student Fees Likely to Rise. . .," Nov. 11, 16, 1991).

"Administrators at both systems were relieved that their budgets were not cut as much as they were last year and that they will be able to admit additional students next year" (Nanette Asimov, "Most Educators Grin and Bear Wilson's Proposals for Schools," Jan. 10, 1992).

"Is a California college education the bargain of the century? Or will higher fees put a college diploma out of reach of growing numbers of poor and middle-class students?" (Louis Freedberg, "Critics Say Wilson's Plan Makes College Unattainable," Jan. 13, 1992).

"I find it exceedingly difficult to comprehend the rationale that leads to fees at the UC going up \$1,200 in two years, and fees at the CCs going up \$20, Gardner said" (Diane Curtis, "Regents Raise Fees 22 percent," January 18, 1992).

"Assemblyman Hayden proposes linking student fees to income. Hayden also would require faculty to teach one more class, control administrative costs, charge more for professional programs, and deny merit increases in Higher Education in years when state employees receive no increase" (Robert Gunnison, "Plan to Reform College Budget," Jan. 22, 1992).

"The way it is now, UC students pay fees, but no tuition. Fees are paid to cover the cost of

student services, such as financial aid and tutorial and recreational programs. Tuition would pay directly for the cost of instruction" (Nanette Asimov, "Gardner Says Budget Squeeze May Force First UC Tuition," Jan. 23, 1992).

"The yearly battle over the state budget began in earnest yesterday with noisy protests, arrests of demonstrators in front of Governor Wilson's office, and a stern warning about the future of higher education from David Gardner" (Robert Gunnison, "Capitol Protest Over College Fee Rise," Feb. 25, 1992).

"Californians eager and often desperate to take college classes without waiting forever or spending a mint are hearing a shocking word—no—from the one public institution that always promised it would never reject anyone. . . . 'Rather than looking at this as a shortfall, why aren't we looking at this as an opportunity to see how we do business?' asked Evan Dobelle, chancellor of City College of San Francisco" (Rick DelVecchio, "Enrollment Outpaces Budget; Cash Squeeze Hurts 2-Year Colleges," Mar. 4, 1992).

"The news comes at a time when the UC and Cal State are barely able to meet the needs of currently enrolled students because of the state's budget crisis. The report's findings suggest that the state is on a collision course between the rising number of students who qualify for college admission and the waning ability of the state to serve them . . . The inescapable demographic and educational trends outlined in the report could require a radical revision of the state's landmark master plan . . ." (Louis Freedberg, "More Students in State Qualify for College," Mar. 25, 1992).

"UC president Gardner sent a blistering letter to Governor Wilson's director of finance this week warning that any additional cuts in either the UC or CSU budgets could effectively destroy California's famed system of Higher Education" (Louis Freedberg, "UC President Gardner Warns Against Further Cuts," Apr. 1, 1992).

". . . For the first time, leaders of the CSU system are talking about the near-certainty of having to shut entire departments, lay off full-

time faculty members and dramatically scale back on student enrollments" ("Budget Woes Imperil College Programs," May 22, 1992).

"San Francisco State President Corrigan compared the plight of the UC and CSU to two friends jumping off the edge of a cliff. The only difference, is that only one is wearing a parachute. The system without the parachute is CSU, he said" ("Rivalry Among College Systems," June 5, 1992).

"We are beginning to tear up the tickets to the American dream, Munitz said" ("State Colleges Prepare 2200 Layoff Notices," June 6, 1992).

"Barring a fiscal miracle, at least 10,000 courses will be cut from catalogs of the 20 campuses of the CSU system for the second successive year" ("CSU Offerings to be Slashed," June 11, 1992).

"Hikes in student fees at state-supported colleges are inevitable because of the budget shortfall, but the majority of students in the UC and CSU systems can easily afford the costs of their education, and financial programs are available or can be made so for those who cannot. . . We continue as a society to subsidize the Higher Education of students from the state's upper middle class and wealthy families" (Joseph Fink, President of Dominican College, Op-Ed, "Independents Can Help Solve Higher Education Problems," June 22, 1992).

#### *San Jose Mercury News*

During the subject year there were 82 substantive articles on higher education in the *Mercury News*. The topics and their frequency were:

1. Budget: 23
  - Higher Education Generally (6)
  - Cal State (12)
  - Community Colleges (3)
  - UC (1)
  - Effect on Minorities (1)
2. Fee Increases: 7
  - General Higher Education (1)
  - UC or Cal State (3)
  - UC (1)
  - Cal State (2)

3. Stanford: 7
  - President Search (2)
  - Overhead (2)
  - 100th Birthday (1)
  - Budget (2)
4. Gardner: 7
  - UC Presidential Pay (1)
  - Gardner Retirement (4)
  - Gardner Parachute (2)
5. Various Presidential Searches: 7
  - San Jose State (4)
  - UC (2)
  - Evergreen Community College (1)
6. Minorities in HE: 7
  - UCB Faculty (1)
  - Salaries (1)
  - General Hiring (1)
  - Participation (4)
7. Student Financial Aid - Federal: 3
8. Proposition 153: 3
9. Higher Education Costs: 3
10. Foothill-DeAnza Community College Scandal: 2
11. Correctness—Sex: 2
12. New Cal State Campus: 1
13. Higher Education Quality: 1
14. Cal State Governance: 1
15. Deganwidah Quezalcotal University: 1
16. Merit Scholarships: 1
17. High School test scores: 1
18. Federal Higher Education Pork: 1
19. Demographics: 1
20. Cheating: 1
21. Northwestern University Program: 1

The budget crisis accounted for more than a quarter of the articles. When added to the fee increase issues, which also were budget dominated, it accounted for some 37 percent of the pieces. The Gardner situation, Stanford, and various presidential searches followed. The *Mercury News* devoted more space to presidential searches than the other papers, at least proportionately; this may have been because of the San Jose State and Stanford influences.

In terms of segmental coverage, Cal State and its member institutions such as San Jose

State were featured in 21 articles. Eleven were directed to the University of California, although three of these dealt with David Gardner's parachute and UC presidential pay and perks. The community colleges were covered in six articles, two of which involved the Foothill-DeAnza budget debacle. Stanford scored in seven.

The *Mercury News* relied comparatively more on outside sources than the other papers. Reprints of articles from other California and national papers (8), wire service articles (17), and Op-Ed pieces (10), accounted for 44 percent of the total number of stories. Articles with local bylines numbered 46 (56 percent).

There were two *Mercury News* editorials. One lamented the effects of rising fees on access and called for legislative consideration of a sliding scale. The other recommended public support of Proposition 153 (college construction bonds).

Most of the local articles were written by Aleta Watson, 22 articles (48 percent), Jeff Gottlieb, six articles (13 percent), and Tom Philp, five articles (11 percent). Among them, the three authored 72 percent of the locally originating pieces.

*Mercury News* coverage of the budget crisis is represented by the following excerpts:

"Proposed: Higher fees everywhere: 40 percent at the UC, 20 percent at CSU, 20 percent in the CCs. Even with the increases, UC and CSU would take budget cuts, while the CCs would get only negligible increase. Winners: CCs, since their budgets weren't cut. Losers: students, not just higher fees, but tight budgets will mean fewer classes. CC campuses will be crowded as students are frozen out of the four-year colleges" ("Governor Pete Wilson's Budget: Who Won, Who Lost," July 18, 1991).

"As many as 30,000 students, who in better times would have gone to the UC or CSU, are expected to flood the state's already beleaguered CCs this fall in a wave these campuses have neither the classes nor money to handle. . . CA's recession has only added to the flood as many unemployed workers return to school to

improve their chances of finding a new job" (Aleta Watson, "Community Colleges Brace for Fall Onslaught of Students," July 23, 1991).

"Doloris LaGuardia is what's known as a freeway flier, one of hundreds of Bay Area instructors who piece together a living by driving from college to college, teaching a course here and a course there, for half the money and few benefits, and hoping to avoid the budget ax. They are in many respects the backbone of public higher education. At SJS, six out of every 10 courses are taught by part-timers" (Tom Philp, "Freeway Fliers' Hit Skids in Teaching," Aug. 19, 1991).

"At least eight campuses of the CSU, strained by budget cuts and swelling student enrollment, will not accept new applications for lower-division admissions for the 1992 spring term, authorities said today" ("CSU Limits Spring Admissions," Sept. 11, 1991).

". . . classes too large, faculty overworked, too many people in classes vs. what we were used to having, too many advisees to faculty, too many courses per faculty member. We've hit a pivotal moment in the state's history of higher education, in my judgment (Munitz)" (Aleta Watson, "Chancellor Says System at Crossroads," Sept. 23, 1991). [Report does not pursue this, but goes on to ask questions of Munitz about the type of person wanted for the presidency of San Jose State.]

"Facing an unprecedented budget crunch, the CSU system declared Friday it no longer can afford its commitment to educate the top third of the state's high school graduates without making a choice: either limit enrollment to preserve quality or keep the doors open with larger classes and fewer professors" (Tom Philp, "CSU Quandry: Quality or Quantity?" Oct. 26, 1991).

"One of the things the Chancellor is talking about now is whether or not the master plan still makes sense. For the first time we are looking at the possibility of not accepting all the students who now qualify for CSU" (Aleta Watson, "CSU Pulls Welcome Mat," Nov. 11, 1991).

"Seeing little or no hope for more money

from the state next year, the UC for the first time is looking at the possibility of charging tuition in addition to fees or abandoning its commitment to admitting every qualified state resident—or both. . . . At issue in the unprecedented discussion is the state's 31-year old Master Plan, which . . . [either action] would mean changing the university's central philosophy" (Aleta Watson, "Enrollment Cuts, Tuition Loom at UC," Nov. 16, 1991).

"Today, as the state struggles to find chicken money in the budget, more and more Californians are denied an affordable college education. . . . In the next year, lawmakers will be grappling with possible solutions to the higher education dilemma. One promising option is a sliding fee scale for the UC system, which would ensure places for the most qualified students, regardless of income level. Fees also could be raised for all college students who are not pursuing degrees, but merely taking classes to enrich their lives. While it's important for the state to serve these students, it is not necessary to subsidize them" (Editorial, "Dreams of an Education," Jan. 3, 1992).

"For the second year in a row, California's university students face the possibility of huge fee increases that threaten the state's reputation for outstanding higher education at bargain basement prices" (Aleta Watson, "Wilson Bets the Budget on Economic Recovery," Jan. 10, 1992).

"California's skyrocketing college fees are squeezing much of its middle class out of the classroom — and leaving many of those remaining heavily in debt on the day they receive their diplomas" (Aleta Watson, "College Fees Squeezing the Middle Class," Jan. 20, 1992).

"Hundreds of university students converged on the Capitol Thursday, hoping to persuade legislators to overturn fee increases that would raise the cost of going to school by as much as \$550 next fall" (Aleta Watson, "Students Lobby Lawmakers. . .," Jan. 22, 1992).

"For the first time in years, CA's overcrowded CCs may get enough money to provide classes for all of their students, if the legislature doesn't take it away" (Aleta Watson, "Two-Year

Colleges Pin Hopes on Budget," Jan. 26, 1992).

"Hoping to soften the blow of a fee increase for students, UC president Gardner has called on his nine campuses to offer more courses next fall—but without using more money" (Renee Koury, "State Higher Education Confronts Crisis," Jan. 27, 1992).

"Wilson praises trustees for their courage and responsibility" (Aleta Watson, "Wilson Lauds CSU Trustees. . .," Mar. 19, 1992).

"Even if the economy rebounds beyond expectation, Munitz predicted Higher Education will continue to suffer. Because of mandated funding, there will be nothing left in the state budget for Higher Education by the year 2000" (McClathy News, "Access to Higher Education in Jeopardy. . .," Apr. 29, 1992).

"CSU may begin laying off tenured faculty as early as next month for the first time ever due to fall budget cuts that could shrink enrollment by the equivalent of three campuses" (Aleta Watson and Michelle Guido, "Crisis Deepens in CSU System," May 28, 1992).

"An unprecedented 340 tenured and tenure-track faculty from 11 campuses will begin receiving layoff notices Monday as the CSU system attempts to deal with the state's drastically shrinking budget" (Aleta Watson, "Layoff Notices Go Out Monday for 340 CSU Faculty Members," June 6, 1992).

"Budget cuts at SJS could prove so severe this fall that they jeopardize the school's future, making it difficult to even start the academic year, interim president Evans said today" (Michelle Guido, "SJS Fall Term in Danger," June 9, 1992).

"California's community colleges—which for decades have offered higher education to everybody who wants it—will be forced to admit students selectively for the first time next year, Chancellor David Mertes said Tuesday" (McClathy News, "Community Colleges to Limit Access," June 10, 1992).

#### A Few Observations

Examples of coverage of other higher education subjects could continue for many more

pages (the printouts, on standard letter size paper, equal six reams). Now it is time to bring this narrative to a close.

In his study of media coverage, George Kaplan (*The Mass Media's Version of America's Schools, 1992*) concluded that when it comes to education, the print and electronic media were not doing as well as they should. According to his forward, written by Fred Friendly, "the sensational immediate [drives] out the long-term substantive," and "the media, all of them, offer us too little hard reporting and informed commentary about the imaginative, hope-inspiring solutions that are unfolding in cities and towns across the country."<sup>21</sup>

The concluding step in the development of this report involved on-site visits and conversations with reporters at the four newspapers.<sup>22</sup> As a rule, these people agreed both with Kaplan's opinion on this subject and the leading assumption of this report: that the story emphases are more on symptoms than organic problems. While all insist that they strive to accomplish in-depth reporting, "in the real world they devote a lot of time struggling to just cover the news." Nevertheless, they also agreed that the readership probably would be receptive to articles addressing relatively complex higher education issues (although one reporter thought that reader receptivity to "high concept" stories might be limited).

It's all relative, of course. The coverage reviewed during the preparation of this report, if sometimes superficial, was generally objective and balanced. In many cases educational issues were "the sensational immediate" in the sense that there were not many stories in California during this period that were more immediate than the budget crisis and the prospect of increased student fees and closed classes. There also were not many that more readily captured the public attention than the circumstances associated with President Gardner's retirement. And there are fewer public services that epitomize California, or that are dearer to the hearts of people who live there, than the state's resplendent higher education systems. But if the coverage was exten-

sive, it also was uneven in its presentation of "imaginative, hope-inspiring solutions."

*Kaplan argues:*

"... around the nation some education writers are still missing the story behind the news. Repeatedly, their digging fails to illuminate such obvious issues as what school restructuring really means and what lies behind it, where educational research stands and its usefulness to the schools, and why, not just whether, thousands of high school students reach graduation time ignorant, uncaring, barely literate, and unable to perform simple calculations. Far too many reporters and editors shower their audiences with anecdotes and true-to-life vignettes while neglecting the larger trends that illustrate their meaning."<sup>23</sup>

The same case can be made with respect to higher education. A considerable amount of reporter time is devoted to doing the obvious things: covering regents' and trustees' meetings, attending press conferences, making sure the news is covered, etc. There is accompanying uncertainty about how much analysis news reporters should attempt. Some insist that newspaper reporters are limited in their ability to conduct analyses, and if there is a possibility of injecting personal opinions, they should stay out of that business altogether. ("Then it belongs on the editorial page.") Others argue that newspapers cannot deal adequately with complexities. For one, at least, the "big job is deciding what to leave out" because of inevitable limits on length.

Whatever the reason, readers sometimes feel the press oversimplifies, especially when only a one-sentence quote out of an entire interview gets printed. The writers recognize the problem. One reporter noted, for example, that he traveled to New York to review the state's tuition assistance program, which he subsequently had to describe for California readers in a 1,000-word piece.

Reporters also suggest that sometimes the fact is overlooked that profound articles require a lot of time and research. (Aleta Watson noted that her Christmas Eve article—cited above—

required two reporters a full month to research and write.)

Kaplan insists that "one of journalism's indoor sports is educationist-bashing." This may be true of elementary and secondary education coverage, but it is not the case when the subject is higher education. As noted, the press coverage seemed unduly deferential to those who toil in higher education's vineyards. This was especially the case when the universities were involved, particularly the University of California, where criticism of the acts of officials failed to extend to an administrative culture that appears to tolerate and possibly nurture managerial prerogatives that many Californians consider egregious. It also failed to extend to higher education governance in general.

It is difficult to avoid the impression that neither the precuneus actions of administrators nor the conceivable nonfeasance of directors can detract from the vast prestige of the University of California. Articles concerning the University of California on matters that did not involve retirement packages were invariably deferential to the institution's stature.

The same observation extends to the Cal State System, although it would be difficult to avoid the impression that this system is held in somewhat less regard than the University of California. Even so, the Cal State institutions figured more prominently in the press coverage this year than did their more prestigious cousins, and the material was usually favorable. Some articles displayed indirect apprehensions over the central office (e.g., the bureaucracy it presumably represents), but opinions of the individual units (favorable, often concerned about the effects of budget reductions) were usually friendly.

Many of the reporters and writers who were interviewed agree that the press has been too gentle. In the opinion of at least one writer, the University of California has been a sacred institution for decades, and the press always has been reluctant to take it on. Some suggested that there is not much of a gap between the University of California and the media estab-

lishments, partly because some of the editors feel an affinity to the University of California that borders on comity.

One reporter felt his paper was "too fixated" on the local University of California campus and did not pay enough attention to other higher education activities. The deference was not reciprocal, however, as he also said that he encounters institutional arrogance and stand-offishness from the universities. In his view, people on these campuses do not like to talk to reporters from California papers, except, perhaps, for the *LA Times*. He also suggested this may be changing: "Now with the crisis the UC feels it really needs the press." Another noted that the University of California is becoming much more media conscious. Local institution presidents are visiting editorial boards, at the system's request, to explain such matters as executive pay.

The comparatively heavy presence of Cal State references in the coverage by all four papers was a bit of a surprise, as was the general paucity of the references to the community colleges. The latter segment seems to have fared comparatively well in terms of budget cuts, and it may not be part of its perceived self-interest to stir up press coverage, but these are important institutions that are becoming even more so in the context of the demographic changes occurring in California and the state's strong reliance on work force training. One might expect more media attention.

Reporters were asked about this. One noted that there is simply more news generated by the University of California system, with its extensive news bureau staffs (it was stated that the local UC campus, for example, had a five-person, full-time news staff). In this reporter's opinion, many of the Cal State campuses, by contrast, may have only one part-time person. The system office, in Long Beach, reportedly has only two people. "For each 10 press releases UC sends out, CSU and its campuses might send five, and this is still five times the news that community colleges (which essentially do not put out press releases) might generate." According to this reporter, these press releases can be important leads for stories. Beyond this,

some of the reporters noted that no one really covers the community colleges, at least as a system.

One of the better treatments of the community colleges was in an Op-Ed piece that ran in the *Sacramento Bee* on July 14, 1991. In this article, "Community Colleges Key to State's Economic Survival," Robert Rivinius, member of the system's board of governors, argued:

"The California Community Colleges are the primary force in educating the state's workers, both those entering employment for the first time and those returning to school to upgrade their training.

"In this era of severely limited state resources, the community colleges are poised to play a significant role in reviving the state's economy. They represent a taxpayer investment in the state's economic health and vitality as they educate citizens to become part of the state's economic base.

"The California Community College system is the largest system of education in the world, with 1.5 million students enrolled in 107 colleges around the state within commuting distance of every major population center."

This piece is notable in at least three respects. First, it is one of the very few that addressed this important educational system, period. Second, if it had a bit of the standard boilerplate in it, it was one of the few instances in which the community colleges were treated as an independent quality and not as objects of an impacted relationship with the other segments (i.e., references to community colleges usually pertained to the effects of university cutbacks on community college enrollments). Third, while not raising them, it supposed positive reactions to some of the community college questions suggested above. It did not ask: Are community colleges really "the primary force in educating the state's workers"? Are they doing as well as they might? Are they meeting expectations respecting academic

preparation? Are they poised to play a significant role in reviving the state's economy? What is that role?

In any case, the story is an example of a means by which slightly longer and more weighty treatments of issues can receive an airing in the California press.

This brings up the subject of contributed articles. All of the papers displayed a willingness to print thoughtful essays from outside writers, including articles on higher education from other papers within California and other states. In addition to wire service materials, the *Bee* broadened its coverage by printing articles from the *Washington Post*, the *Dallas Morning-News*, and the *Fort Lauderdale Sun-Sentinel*. The *San Francisco Chronicle* ran articles from *U.S. News and World Report*, the *LA Times*, and the *Washington Post*. The *Mercury News* used material from the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post*, the *Chicago Tribune*, the *LA Times*, and the *Chicago Times*.

The use of contributed pieces also represented an important effort to broaden the coverage of higher education. The record is worth reviewing briefly here. The positions of the authors and titles of these essays reveal the range of issues covered.

The *Bee* ran contributions from:

David Roberti, President Pro Tem of the State Senate ("An Expedient State Budget; Second, Longer Look at the Crisis 'Solutions,'" July 25, 1991);

Paul Gray, Chairman and former President of MIT ("Antitrust Law in the Marketplace of College Tuition," July 26, 1991);

Kim Williams, Chair of the California State Student Association ("Affirmative Action in Admission," Aug. 8 1991);

Frederick Starr, President of Oberlin ("3-Year College Plan . . .," Oct. 10, 1991);

Robin Wilson, President of CSU-Chico ("No Gay Cadets, No ROTC at Chico," Oct. 16, 1991 and "Making Room for A Surge of College Students," Nov. 22, 1991);

Gerald Graff, University of Chicago Faculty

("How to Protect the Campuses from the Dogmatists," from the *Chronicle for Higher Education*, Mar. 1, 1992); and

Andrew Hacker, Queens College Faculty ("A Bloat of Well-Heeled Profs," from the *Chronicle for Higher Education*, Mar. 8, 1992).

The *Los Angeles Times* printed contributions from:

David Gardner ("Perspective on higher Education," July 30, 1991);

Richard Moore, President of Santa Monica College ("Save Undergrads from the Maw of UC," Aug. 15, 1991);

David Glidden, Philosophy Instructor at Riverside ("Why Not Reward a Political Scientist Who Helps a Neighborhood," Nov. 17, 1991);

David Davenport, President of Pepperdine ("No More Free Rides for Students Who can Pay," Nov. 24, 1991);

Michael Moore, a Junior at Rutgers ("Why Most Students Cheat," Jan. 12, 1992);

Nancy Luna, Communications major at CSUF ("Lowering the Boom on Higher Education," Feb. 19, 1992);

Kim Williams, Chair of the California State Student Association ("Student in Debt," Mar. 1, 1992); and

Ruth Rosen, Professor of History at UCD ("Trashing of the Public University," June 7, 1992).

In the case of the *San Francisco Chronicle*, contributors included:

Gregory Stevens, Doctoral Student at Davis ("UC Berkeley Launches Multiculture Requirement," Aug. 30, 1991); and

Joseph Fink, President of Dominican College ("Independents Can Help Solve Higher Education Problems," June 22, 1992).

The *San Jose Mercury News* accepted pieces from:

Christopher Hooker-Haring, Director of Admission at Muhlenberg College ("Merit is Middle Class Ticket to College," Sept. 20, 1991);

Robin Wilson, Chico President ("Innovation and College Must Mix," Nov. 14, 1991);

Gustavo A Mellander, West Valley-Mission Community College District Chancellor ("Hispanic Report Card," Dec. 2, 1991);

Louis Menand, Queens College Faculty ("What Are Universities For?" Dec. 22, 1991);

Leslie Glatstein, graduate Student at SJS ("It's Harder and Harder to Get an Education," Feb. 6, 1992);

Scott Rice, SJS Professor ("SJS Presidential Pool is Undistinguished," Mar. 16, 1992); and

John Bunzel, past President of SJS ("A Tale of Two Universities. . .," June 14, 1992).

Turning for a moment to the quality of the home team writers, this does not seem to be a matter for dispute. Maybe the editors were exceptionally good, but the physical aspects of the reporting—the quality of the writing—was remarkably high. One of the writers interviewed agreed: "These are highly competent reporters—there are four or five people that are really good, self-directed."

This impression also contrasts with some of Kaplan's observations about the journalistic skills of education writers. In his words, "the education beat lacks prestige. . . it bears the label of being a beginner's job."<sup>24</sup> He continues, "Much of the job of reporting on schools . . . consists of attending conferences and meetings, digesting and discarding press releases, and wading through well-advertised reports. . ."<sup>25</sup> All of this is reflected in a lower quality of reporting.

Kaplan suggests that education writers need sufficient sophistication to keep matters (in this case, the utterings of university presidents,

the aura of prestigious board members, the reputation of the university) in perspective. This can be difficult, apparently, for a new reporter of the type routinely assigned to the beginning education beat.

The condition has ramifications. Kaplan quotes Edward Fiske (then of the *New York Times*), and Amy Stuart Wells to the effect that "... the most obvious consequences of the press relying on inexperienced education reporters who lack some background in the issues and research literature in education [are that] they might not be able to ask intelligent questions about research findings. They may not know how to distinguish good stuff from the junk, and they sometimes don't even know news when they see it."<sup>26</sup>

Perhaps the higher education beat is a more distinguished step on the journalism career ladder than K-12, but if a failure to search for or exploit the deeper consequences of various conditions (Issues of the Second Kind) was a common press shortcoming, it would be difficult to attribute this to a lessened professional quality among editorial and reportorial staffs. All of the papers utilized corps of higher education reporters who displayed excellent journalistic skills. One is reluctant to cite names, since some will be left out, but the work of people such as Aleta Watson, Tom Philp, Jeff Gottlieb (*San Jose Mercury News*), William Trombley, Daniel Weintraub, Larry Gordon, (*Los Angeles Times*), Louis Freedberg (*San Francisco Chronicle*), Peter Shrag, Deb Kollars, Dan Walters, and Lisa Lapin (*Sacramento Bee*) was frequently impressive.

On the subject of editorials, if the activity (more intensive at the *Bee* and *Times* than the others) and styles varied, the editorials often were thought-provoking. On balance, the award for editorial coverage, however, would have to go to the *Bee*.

At this point it can be argued that the press did a pretty fair job of covering the higher education Issues of the First Kind during this period. But if it is to be expected to do a really good job in the future, and by that is meant serving as an active and objective third party to the

debate by alerting the reading public to the policy implications of higher education events, the Issues of the Second Kind, it will need some help. As more than one reporter noted, it is difficult to get behind the official institutional releases.

The California Higher Education Policy Center could help to advance the degree of journalistic insight by serving as a thoughtful and unbiased resource and catalyst for the press. If the Center would raise issues and get the discussion going, and provide information and data, reporters agreed it would be of service. Reporters also agreed that if the Center releases reports and arranges press conferences, these will be covered. ("If you build it, they will come.") And if these reports address systemic issues, those also will be covered. They also agreed that well-written Op-Ed pieces are welcome. And they agreed with the assumption that a knowledgeable contact at the Center would be utilized.

There are not many others that can or will serve as a resource. In the Rothblatt book, Pat Callan noted that CPEC, the state agency with responsibility to represent the public interest in higher education, "is generally respected for the technical aspects of its research, such as surveys of faculty salaries, analyses of standards for space allocation and gathering information on subjects of interest to the Legislature. However, its willingness and ability to play a leadership role in raising and addressing core public and educational issues is very much in question."<sup>27</sup> The press coverage during the review year substantiates this. While CPEC reports were covered as they were released, as were CPEC meetings, there was relatively little evidence of reliance on the agency for advice on the policy aspects of stories.

All of the people who were interviewed felt that the state lacks an independent resource in the sense of a place or person that can be contacted and asked for interpretations of reports or events concerning higher education. Several said they would like to have such an objective source, a higher education entity that would perform the role for that sector that PACE

(Policy Analysis for California Education) does for K-12. One identified the problem as a lack of "credible and articulate critics—people who do not get their information out of newspapers." Thus, if the Center wants to be useful, it can, but it will have to be definitive and willing to take positions on sometimes controversial matters.

Several recommended that the Center regularly remind the papers of its presence. It could sustain media contact by calling on editorial boards once a year. One editor said that the media are used to outreach and are receptive to it. If the Center brought along "Some heavy hitters, to talk about such matters as the future of the master plan, for example, we would listen." Other means also are apparent (reflective essays, frequent communications on events, insightful reports, serving as a reliable information resource, etc.). Based on this assessment, the press constitutes a generally appreciative audience.

The Center might approach the task through meetings with editorial boards, ensuring the presence of its office's telephone numbers in higher education reporters' rolodexes, developing reports and scheduling subsequent meetings with reporters to discuss the significance of findings, staging seminars with the press, preparing Op-Ed pieces that venture into the realm of the Issues of the Second Kind, etc. Press conferences also would be helpful. (But these received mixed reviews; one reporter cited problems with deadlines. Another said that he sometimes "feels used" by press conferences. Still another said that he/she likes to get ahead of everyone else, and press conferences "start everyone at the same time.")

In the end, a comprehensive and effective approach will require a thoughtful plan, and that is beyond the scope of this report. But the need is evident and the results will be worth the effort.

### Methodology

All of the higher education coverage of the four California dailies during the past year was examined. Records of these newspapers and others in California are available on microfilm in various libraries, most of which are in-state. This report, however, was written in Washington State. The Seattle Public Library and the Main Library of the University of Washington maintain microfilm versions of the *Los Angeles Times* and the *San Francisco Chronicle*. Several county and municipal libraries subscribe to these and one or two other major California dailies, but these are not on microfilm and the newsprint versions are discarded after two months.

The four newspapers examined are available electronically via the DIALOG data file. This was the medium utilized. The individual articles were identified and collected through a computer search. Full printouts of each article, including the headline, byline, date, word count, and text were obtained. The printout also indicated whether the story was an editorial, Op-Ed piece, or news article.

To ensure that the search was collecting all of the relevant stories, the first two months' production of the *Los Angeles Times* (July and August 1991) was compared with the microfilm records at the University of Washington, whereupon it was determined that some of the articles collected through the computer search would have been overlooked in a microfilm search. Thus, the computer search proved to be not only more efficient in terms of time and travel, but more inclusive as well. If reliance on computer records effectively limited the review to the *Sacramento Bee*, the *Los Angeles Times*, the *San Francisco Chronicle*, and the *San Jose Mercury News*, the four California dailies available through this medium (at the time these four newspapers comprise the universe of California dailies available for computerized searches), one could be assured that all of the pertinent material from each was identified and assembled.

The period selected for review was July 1, 1991, through June 30, 1992, the most recent

complete academic year. (While the focus of the review was on the 1992 fiscal year, print-outs of all articles identified through the search for the 1991 and 1992, through September, calendar years were examined, although only articles appearing during the subject year were employed for the study; others, the *San Francisco Examiner*, the *Fresno Bee* have been added.)

The computer search captured all articles that involved some aspect of California higher education either directly or indirectly. Sometimes the higher education reference was no more than mention of the college a prominent person attended. Thus, the material had to be reviewed and sifted. Only articles substantively concerned with higher education matters were utilized in the review.

Some 420 usable articles (representing about a third of those identified in the search) were examined, and these provided the information base for the study.

Copies of the first draft of the report were sent to at least one higher education reporter at each of the four papers. This was followed by on-site interviews wherein the reporters were queried on the draft itself and on a number of aspects associated with their work. Their opinions on these subjects are reflected, for the most part, in the concluding section of the report.

### About the Author

William Chance is not a journalist, although he did successfully complete an introductory college course in journalism a quarter of a century ago. Presently he is executive officer of North American Education Research (NORED) a research consultant specializing in education policy analysis, and an avid newspaper reader. He is a former member of the research faculty of the University of Washington's Institute for Public Policy and Management and "Scholar in Residence" to the Western Governors' Association.

Chance is author of a book entitled, *The Best of Educations*, which is a critique of the nation-

al school reforms of the 1980s, and which was prepared under a grant from the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation of Chicago.

He is former executive director of the Washington State Temporary Committee on Educational Policies, Structure, and Management, a committee created by the Washington Legislature in 1982 to study and make recommendations on all aspects of public education in the state. Before that, Chance was director of academic affairs at the state's Council on Postsecondary Education, a post he held for twelve years. In this capacity he was responsible for the development of the state's first two long-range higher education plans and a variety of research studies.

Chance has a Ph.D. in Political Science from Ohio State University. As a consultant he has conducted numerous studies involving most educational sectors, K-12 through higher education, two-year and four-year, academic and vocational, public and private. Recent reports have addressed such matters as program evaluation, capital facilities planning, community and technical college programming, barriers to the social and economic participation of disabled people, assessment of education management structures, K-12/-higher education articulation, public policy and private higher education, education and economic development, occupational education and work force training, higher education and rural revitalization, education need assessments, tuition futures prepayment plans, accreditation, and educational savings bond plans, among others.

He has worked closely with official organizations—local school districts, state departments of education, institutions of higher learning, state higher education boards, governors' offices, and state legislatures—in Washington and several other states, including California, Oregon, Iowa, Utah, Wyoming, and Montana, on various aspects of long-range higher education planning and on school improvement.

He and his wife Alice, and their two golden retrievers, Sherman and Roo, reside with a demented cat named Arthur in Olympia, Washington.

1. William Chance, "... *The Best of Educations: Reforming America's Public Schools in the 1980s* (Chicago: John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, 1986.)
2. Robert Reich, *The Power of Public Ideas* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988) pp. 3-4.
3. Ibid., George Kaplan, p. 6, 11.
4. *The Mass Media's Version of America's Schools* (Washington, D.C.: Institute for Educational Leadership, 1992) p. 15.
5. Sheldon Rothblatt, *The OECD, the Master Plan and the California Dream* (Berkeley: Center for Studies in Higher Education, 1992) pp. 45-46.
6. Ibid., p. 25.
7. Ibid.
8. John Yang, "In California, Another Dream Fades," *Washington Post Weekly* (Sept. 21-27, 1992).
9. Robert J. Samuelson, "The Low State of Higher Ed," *The Washington Post Weekly* (Sept. 7-13, 1992).
10. Kaplan, op. cit., p. 25.
11. H.H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills, eds. *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology* (New York: Oxford, 1958), p. 214, cited in David Osborne and Ted Gaebler, *Reinventing Government* (Reading, Massachusetts: Addison-Wesley, 1992), p. 13.
12. Kaplan, op. cit., p. 41.
13. Comment by Tex McCrary in a *Vanity Fair* article on William Safire, "Safire and Brimstone," by Marjorie Williams, Nov., 1992, p. 158.
14. Kaplan, op. cit., p. 1.
15. Ibid., p. 5.
16. Ibid., pp. 10-11.
17. This list is influenced by the one prepared by Pat Callan and published in Rothblatt, op. cit., "California's Master Plan for Higher Education: Some Second Thoughts for the Fourth Decade," pp. 88-90. Callan raised the following questions:  

"Should the state have an overall plan for higher education expansion? (Or will the laissez-faire approach suffice, with each system using its own assumptions about enrollment needs, state priorities, and availability of financial resources to plan, at the same time generating its own political support for new and expanded campuses? Will this produce the best outcome for prospective students? For taxpayers?)

"Should new research universities be built to accommodate growing numbers of high school

graduates eligible for the UC under current policies? (Does it make sense to respond to demand for new undergraduate spaces by building universities that will hire faculties and allocate most of their resources for research and graduate education? Are there alternatives to new research campuses, such as greater utilization of community colleges for freshmen and sophomores, restricting the amount of time undergraduates spend in colleges at state expense to the traditional four years, creating new three-year baccalaureate programs, tightening admissions requirements, . . . increases in faculty undergraduate teaching, or some combination?)

"How should the state and the higher education systems recognize the reality that California has embarked on the second round of abrupt and steep fee increases in a little more than a decade? (The issue here is not that students are being 'overcharged' in terms of value, but that the process for adjusting fees is politicized and unstable—a function of the condition of the state treasury rather than of policy. One result is that fees go up when the economy is going down—when family discretionary resources are declining, part-time and summer jobs are more difficult to find, and fewer resources are available for student financial assistance.) . . .

"Should the 'no tuition' policies of UC and CSU be altered to permit money collected from students to support academic programs instead of restricting the use of these revenues to nonacademic services and financial aid for students? (The current policies have not succeeded in protecting students or their families from fee increases, but they prohibit the use of the proceeds for educational programs. Thus, students may pay more for less education, as their fees increase but the monies cannot be spent on their educational programs.

"Should the state increase grants for needy and qualified students attending private colleges and universities? If more students attended private institutions, would fewer places be needed in public colleges and universities? Would there be a net savings to the state?

"Would it make more educational and financial sense for faculty at public research universities to devote more time and effort to undergraduate teaching? After a period of heavy emphasis on research, is it time to adjust the balance in UC and other research universities, tilting in the direction of undergraduate teaching in the nineties?

"If effective teaching and learning are high priorities for the next few years, should state policy and financing reflect this? Should institutions and faculty that respond to the need for more effective teaching be rewarded? . . . Do the incentives in

place at the state and institutional levels adequately reflect the importance of teaching?"

18. Rothblatt, Callan, op. cit., p. 91.
19. It should be noted that the frequency references do not include literally all of the *Bee* articles dealing with the budget crisis; many stories on the budget listed the wide range of public services that would be affected by cutbacks, and higher education was but one. In those cases it was felt that the article was not directed to higher education. The articles selected for treatment here dealt predominantly with some aspect of the budget crisis' effects on higher education. Also, many specific issues, as was the case with David Gardner's retirement package, were influenced by the budget situation. Some topics, such as administrative salaries and perks, could be classified under either the Budget Crisis or Gardner Retirement rubrics, since the reporting usually encompassed both — e.g., articles that considered the Regents' action especially deplorable because of the budget crisis. Here they are not treated as a budget issue, since it was primarily the retirement package awarded to President Gardner that prompted the subsequent inquiry.
20. This may be a spurious observation. As one *Times* reporter suggested, the paper routinely runs three editorials each edition. Hence, if news coverage involved a greater number of stories than might be the norm at other papers, as might be the case with *Times* news coverage, the editorial-to-story ratio would be less. The point was well-taken.
21. Kaplan, op. cit., foreword.
22. These transpired in December 1992. The interview with one reporter, Larry Gordon at the *Times*, was by telephone. The others were conducted on site with Aletha Watson of the *Mercury News*, Louis Freedberg of the *Chronicle*, and Peter Shrag and Lisa Lapin of the *Bee*. Each of these people was provided with an advance copy of a draft of this report.
23. Kaplan, op. cit., p. 20.
24. Kaplan, op. cit., p. 24.
25. Kaplan, op. cit., p. 26.
26. Kaplan, op. cit., p. 27.
27. Rothblatt, Callan, op. cit., p. 85.

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